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OF
PALOMIDE

FAMOUS KNIGHT

KING ARTHUR'S ROUND TABLE

ALIAN PRINCE.

London:
H. W. ALLEN,
1, 3 & 5 MARK LANE, E.C.

With the author's warmest
regards.

OF PALOMIDE.

Carr, Frank

OF
PALOMIDE
FAMOUS KNIGHT
OF
KING ARTHUR'S ROUND TABLE

BY
ÆLIAN PRINCE.

London :
E. W. ALLEN,
4, AVE MARIA LANE, E.C.

1890

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**HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
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1918**



TO
CHARLES KENT,
REMEMBERING HIS GRACIOUS ENCOURAGEMENT
AND
HIS INTIMACY WITH MINDS
WHOSE GENIALITY AND GENIUS
HAVE BEEN
LIGHT, GRACE AND POWER TO THE
LITERATURE OF OUR CENTURY.

PROEM.

YES, I am minstrel for this evening hour
Sweet Esther. Seat thee there, my heart, beneath
Those liberal golden showers, which Spring suspends,
Laburnum's bloom, close by the garden gate.
And with that glory we have purple, too—
The lilac hedge—indisputable gleams
Of Love it brings to us : soft, fragrant airs,
Creep from the verdant covert—ah, that breath !—
The perfume of the violet of the shade
Which blesses hearts to whom it nothing owes—
It gives us memories lingering of true-love.

—Yea, here, not elsewhere, I am your bard,
Your scald, your troubadour : for this our tale
Requires free air—such air as ever breathed
The valiant, loving, master-knights of old.
We shall have music, too, above, around—
The lavrock rains it from the blue ; yon larch
Is vocal with the thrush.

We may believe
In full accord each listening heart shall beat
With each event in field or bowers, for we
Are of the lineage we sing. * * *

But, hark,—
Queen of my song ! Think of our happy years,
And take my verse as of their happy growth
A genial portion, for as well as wars,
Of Love I sing : and let the cynic girl,
And laughing casuist boy, on either side
Sit by thee in a truce of poësy.
Our other friends of grace and older days,
May listen as they choose amongst the trees.
Friends are for judgment, Esther. Thou, bride-queen,
First, best-beloved, thine all of this, my song.



CHAPTER I.

Of Table Round he was the pearl, the flower,
In Arthur's peerage he was perfect knight,
Tristram : so named of sorrow, since his birth
Drew o'er his mother's eyes the veil of death.
Yet, never name so ill was worn, for blithe
As in his minstrel mirth was he in war.
Soonest of all his fellowship he shed
The sable plume of sorrow from his soul.
Sage Merlin told on his nativity,
The stars ordained of song and power ruled clear
Within their heavenly houses. These, the words :—
“ His hours of life are mingled gold and gloom,
“ But hours of gloom o'ercome by golden hours,
“ With better speed than fortunes other knights.
“ The hours' conclusion—sudden—it may come
“ Only from hands o'erburdened with the grace
“ And largess of his love : whene'er the time
“ A loyal and affectionate spear shall slake
“ Within his heart, thirst for his foeman's blood.”
As brave as Launcelot, lacking half his blame,
Heart-noble as the King, without the taint
Which clings to power, he suffered, strove, and shone
The clearest Light of Honour to his times,
And Knight of Love—of Arthur's martial Ring
The Light of Honour, and the Knight of Love.

* * * * *

Yet, now he lies within Ierne's bowers

For heal of hurt—ah, yet to find more hurt,
As his more bliss, than comes from spear, or sword,
Or leech with magic herbs. Strange, errant life
His heretofore. Or ere of youth its rose
Blanched on his cheeks, his father's second bride,
Whose love towards Tristram was a love sharp-set
To find her sons of birthright dispossessed
By a forerunner pleasing to all hearts,
Twice poisoned she the chalice with intent
On Tristram's life,—whereby, she woke the furies.
Her fairest son, her eldest born, athirst
Partook the drink and languished on her knee
Till death in mercy stilled his pain: the king,
Had drunk the second, but her conscience moved
Seized the envenomed cup and spake her guilt:
Whereon, she doomed to expiate by fire
The crime of that device,—but saved from thence,
'Twas famed through Lyonesse, his native realm,
In garnished story and domestic song
How Tristram gained a pardon for the queen—
Made her, save twain, his truest fere in life.
That same year, Tristram crossed to France; learned there
All curious arts of sport, for which renown
Through many a century at the jocund feast,
And hot carouse which crowns the hunting day,
Rang loud for him. Moreover, thence he brought
Rarest of cunning on the harp. 'Tis told,
No mortal ever could withstand the strain!
That bird and beast, yea, fish within the lake
Were charmed on hearing. Tuneful as benign,
He was a wondrous harper: known full soon
Through Britain's island precincts, for the youth
As in his knightly prime, wide-wandering sought
Adventurous exploit. But chiefly this,
Marked his long alien residence; with growth
Of hardihood there was a growth of soul:

With aptitude and clemency in arms,
There was repose of aspect and a low
Affectionate tenderness of voice, which drew
This fair memorial of him : " Each estate
Did love him wheresoever he did go."

Returned to Lyonesse, on Tristram came
A change of spirit : better say, were changed
Its hope and object. Looking on his life
Amidst the mirth and courtliness of France
Restless, unsatisfied, remorseful, he
As wakening from a futile March-day's dream
Yearned for the full-orbed blazon of a knight.
Hence, grew his story : hence, his name in song
His fame, as lord of honour : as the peer,
Peerless in honour and the parleying heart.
First Lyonesse to feel his passion's power
By spear and song—wherein, betimes, were won
Such reverence of his might, such awe, such love,
The kingdom in its peace through all his days
Slept, wotting that his harp still sang, his lance
Was ever-ready. That emprise now closed,
He, at his father's solitary court,
Bemoaned the slowly creeping, vacant months
As Honour lost, because not newly won :
Ill shown in dull despair.

Now, reached him news
From Cornwall's bounds : its royal head, king Mark,
His father's brother, a slight, suspicious man
One who would give offence for love of harm,
And find offence housed in a kindly deed,
Whose crown was trembling ever in the storm
Of foes once named as friends, one friendship lost,
Born in the honest flowering time of youth.
Ungracious, slanderous, and a viper act,
Which stung and menaced in his scorn that friend

Anguis, imperial head of Ireland's realm,
From Castlehaven, throughout her breadth of green
To Giant's Causeway : whence retributive,
Before Tintagel's gate now stood the knight
Sir Marhaus, next in fame to him who stood
Chiefest, Sir Launcelot, of the Table Round.
There, in his rocky keep, his royal home,
Tintagel, Mark was kept as is a dog
Kept to his kennel by the keeper's thong.
More than his idle graceless time mourns now
Young Tristram—as at Honour's death. Spake then,
To save him from himself, with coyest words
The step-dame queen. In subtle playfulness
She bade him see that Honour was with him
As Love with knights of fame, and honour-sick
None other cure could come save on that field,—
Whence Honour might arise, when heard the call
Of one strong heart—the stricken Cornish realm.
So said, so heard, so done with quickest speed
That thence three days Tintagel knew the youth,
Tristram.

He, brought within its audience hall,
Beheld a shape—low-statured, quivering, thin,
Bedecked with mis-shaped yellow weeds and crowned.
“The court fool !” thought he : but he heard it named—
The king. And that was Mark. Well might surprise
O'ercome the court as in the silence breathed
Expectancy, beholding there these twain
Contrasted, met by love's election, bound
To weave the sweetest, mournfullest, most strange
Of all love's histories : that eager, young,
Bright son of valour and of song : and he
Their stunted king, whose age a wrinkled skin,
Dry, brown as parchments of a ducal house,
Concealed, but in whose deep-set slinking eyes
A heart of fraud lay clear.

On his first watch,
Ensconced within the fosse, the prince beheld
Sir Marhaus ride up from the beach, a god
A very god of battle and of doom
Resplendent in the early sun—and life
Went from his spirit, and he dwelt apart
One abject week. But dawn of Pentecost
Brought grace of strength in heart, and Tristram bore
The menace of the warrior peaceably.
Next day, defiance : and the youth implored
Mark make him knight. Then Mark, amidst his court,
Fools in their craven laughter, drew his brand
Muttering—"Shall impotence attend the act ?
"Our chapel all devoid of holy rites
"In this extremity, we lack the priest
"For sacrament—Nay, the anointed King
"Suffices !" Tristram knew a feeble blow
From scathless blade, the consecrating words
With fluttered accents "In the name of God,
"And His archangel, Michael, and His hosts
"Militant, we do dub thee Knight. Arise !—
"Thus, nephew, hath the valiance of thy tongue
"Brought honour towards thee—but its darling home
"Is in the dangerous quest. Now, show how keen
"My spur to worthy deed. Sir Marhaus calls.
"Answer be thine : and honour in thee show
"Clear, double-edged, twin to thy sword." Upsprang,
The youth responsive, "By the Evangelists !
"Sir Tristram now is born," with rising voice
Hailing thus soon his quest. "O, ladies bright,
"Sweet proxies of the beauteous sisterhood
"Irradiating the soul of this dark world
"Refining, cleansing, cheering powers : pray, learn
"These first words of my knighthood : hear the scope
"Of its intent. Know well, ye ladies bright,
"My way in life, shall take your smiles for flowers :
"My way in life, for stars shall seek your eyes ;

"The ladies are my charge, and with the law
"And order of the state make up my being.
"My way in life, is towards the Table Round."

Next morning, saw great Marhaus driven to ship,
Discomfited and wounded unto death.
So soon—for which high festival was held
By Mark—so soon, Sir Tristram's life arrayed
With smiles more sweet than flowers, and moved beneath
A heaven of ladies' eyes more bright than stars,
And felt years nearer to the Table Round.

But toils, and woes, and wounds are knighthood's price,
And Tristram reckoning with his foeman's lance
Deep hurt received beyond the leech's cure.
One, then, of astral lore, enquiring whence
The knight whose skill bestowed the dolorous wound
And answered Ireland—"Unto Ireland speed,
"The healing power awaits thee there." Where come,
The knight, as in Love's providence, was lodged
Close by the castle—now the mourning days
For Marhaus ended—where King Anguis held
Free-hearted, courtly state—since heard a voice
That soon an errant, knightly spear of worth
Should fill the vacant quest for Ireland's weal.

* * * *

One mist-clad, breathless noon, as was his wont,
To allay the fierceness of his pain and win
A new and pleasant voyage for his thoughts,
He harped upon his bed. His memory strayed
O'er blissful times bygone : insensibly,
As half in dream he lay, his hand awoke
A strain once sung in France : a strain whereon
Birds, brooklets, leaves and sudden showers would sing
And every heart in hearing would be merry.
Too great its charm for Amicie of Gand ;
The minstrel passing with a love unsworn,

Reft of his comforting melody she kept
Her bower and sorrowed to her death.

That lay,

Harped Tristram now, and as he harped the dusk
Slid from the face of the high jubilant noon.
Commingle noises grew i' th' air, from streams,
Near winged choirs, the tremulous woods and reeds.
The chambers of his lodge brake into laughter.
Up to the castle rose the magical strain,
Swept round its walls, assailed its ports and towers,
Where found one cedarn casement garlanded
With odorous flowers tangled in sprays of green
Wide open to receive the new-born joy,
Entering, it passed through galleries, chambers, halls,
Caught kitchen churls, peers, matrons dull of sprite—
And lo, from forth yon ivied postern steps
The fairest star of maidenhood on earth !
In azure robes ; a golden girdle binds
Their fulness close beneath the bosom's rise :
Her tresses, snooded with rare blooms of spring,
Inwardly darkle, as our richest thoughts
Within the soul wanting fit words for day—
Towards the sun, stirring with a shining life
Each several hair—like fine thoughts finding voice
For conquest of the world and praise—such they
To sight of men, these tresses which must shew
The inner nature of her sensitive being.
So comes she, gliding with soft musical grace,
Her countenance as a dawn of early May
Which beautifies the world o'er which it smiles.
The drawbridge crossed—she, down the budding lane,
Into his lodge, into his very room,
When to the faded eyes of Tristram shone
A spirit from sweet mercy's heaven, down-drawn
By his great strain to heal—to solace him
Through many changeful years to come.—I wit,

Ye all know who the starry maiden was,—
La Belle Isonde !

The spirit gazed—and fled—
Nor word—nor sign—but soon a helpful band
Of servitors down-speeding from the keep,
Bore him up thither. There, in chamber cool
Sweetened by every flower and fragrant bush
That in her pleasaunce 'neath her lattice grew,
Isonde was constant in her duteous love,
With divers aids medicinal to bate
His malady. A gainless task of tears,
Until her mother furnished potent draughts
Educ'd from shrubs and herbs and mandrake roots
By wizard operation—art, forsooth,
Which mightier ends for both, hereafter, brings.
Thence day by day, his fever ebb'd ; his eyes
Won their young light again.—O, happy he,
To feel the world grow lovelier morn and even :
Eve sweeter than the morn, the morn more sweet
Than the past eve with all its peace and stars—
And Isonde anxious, passionate and quick
On feeblest sign or sound in this her proud
Triumphant labour of a crescent love.—
O happy Tristram ! Happy Belle Isonde !

This time, a rumour wandered through the Isle,
Achievements were at hand of dread and death,
Since Palomide, the sable heathen knight
From Upsal's plain, warfarer in his love—
For Belle Isonde drew many subject hearts
From far-off lands to her sea-circled home—
Ranging the realm adventurous, on report
Of harbourage of a strange, unproven knight,
Named as the Nameless, now with restless foot
Haunted the castle's purlieus. Humblest hearts
Can judge of lordliest ; simple village maids

Spelled lightly, rightly of the matter's growth
And what should follow : wedded island folk
Wot wisely, too, these crossing loves would shew
War's blood-red blossoms,

Nor less so it happed.

For one fair dame, the Lady of the Lands,
King Anguis was beholden to let cry
A tournament. Our maiden Beautiful
Bethought of this, with ample news beguiled
A short spring eve. But this her story told,
In warlike phrase with silver laughs between,
None answer gave the Nameless, and Isonde
Might not behold beneath the gathering shades
Earnest of fray which gleamed within his eyes
Whilst she had spoken. Through that wasteful night,
Waking, or dreaming as one half-awake,
Within his ears resounded dash of steeds,
Blasts of the tromp : before his eyes, the glare
Of lightnings from the shield. The vacant dark
Shook with accursed taunts, wide flashed the stroke
Of sword blades unaccomplished : bitter taste
There was of bitterness far worse than death,
Taste of discomfiture most rash, most foul,
And unredeemable. On him attended
The sprites of horror known of sleepless minds
Which make a tempest of the silent hours.
At earliest dawn with dumb voice cried his soul
And through that day : "I must acquit myself.
" The shame within me, daughter of disease,
" Not of my nature, may no longer lodge
" Within a heart to honour dedicate
" And love." Whereon, he gently spake Isonde,
Who light o' heart conspired to prove at full
His growing vigour, as a knight from far,
Mistimed, who seeks the lists with errant spear.

That tourney-day being come : advanced the jousts ;
The court, the vassal-throngs inspired by sight
Of marvellous chevisaunce which made that field
As lustrous in the scroll of chivalry
As famed Caerleon's jousts what time the King
Arthur, achieved his crown against six kings—
Isonde in worship of her nameless lord
Ordained and well-arrayed him all in white
And privily brought him forth. To churls and court,
'Tis told, he seemed an angel from the skies
Descended on a cause of solemn right.
His face, fresh from the beauty of Isonde,
Shone sunbright through the tourney's dusty air,
Whilst he displayed anew to ruthless fray
The blazon of his shield, first in renown
Henceforth in herald's lore, the argent lion.
Instantly, veered opinion of the day.
As silent as his airy, snow-white plume
Waved o'er his helm, the silence of the throng
Waiting his onset. Three long wood-wroth hours
The trumpet's urgent call found him to fore,
Rousing the stormy glories of the lists.
The keen fang of his spear—his yearning sword—
Made a huge crimson vintage to redeem
His mischance from the stroke of Marhaus : none,
Prince, baron, peer, whoever couched the lance,
Or lifted brand against him, but o'erthrown
Amidst such wreck of harness as ne'er graced
Cadwor, Geraint, Owaine, those knights elect
For battle, leaders of the Table Round,
Paid homage to his dire puissance, while
Swart Palomide down-beaten was forsworn
Of Belle Isonde, unknighthed for a year.
The Lady of the Lands, and her demesne
Our knight forewent, again that they should fire
The eagles and the buzzards of the lists.—

So fared the Light of Honour on that day.

How many months, how many dulcet months—
 Nay, curious gentles, ask me not how long
 Within the verdant kingdom Tristram held
 Bondsman to love : each jot of knightly will
 Meshed in Belle Isonde's wondrous, affluent hair :
 His heart intoxicate with joy to note
 Her gentle goings.

* * * *

Then came sudden close.

Secret, imperative, a missive brief
 Called on him to depart. "At once?—and whither?"
 "And why?" enquired La Belle Isonde, a tear,
 The virgin tear of her surpassing love,
 Shining within her eye. 'Twas, thereupon,
 His name he told—his history—his estate—
 And somewhat of his heart—which made Isonde
 Tremble as on the forecast of an hour
 When love would glorify all ensuing hours.
 Thus, farewell on their lips had more than words
 For comfort : words more of the living soul
 Than common day-speech : and with confidence
 In love's presiding spirit to bring all good
 In near good time, the maiden to her bower,
 Tristram before a frolic, singing wind
 Sailed to his aim, Tintagel's surge-beat towers.

That mandate was for service.—This achieved,
 Tintagel found a guest much changed from him
 Tristram, ere known of Ireland's court. Isonde,
 Dwelt angel of his spirit everywhere ;
 Ever upon his lips as in his heart ;
 Till Mark, infected by his mood and praise,
 Longed for the royal maid. Her knight soul-racked
 Held silence, kept apart,—but much too late.

For by great Honour, worship of his soul,
His fealty held a covenant with Mark, whereby
Mark's word became a law unto his soul.
Thus, when Mark spoke his charge, Sir Tristram took
That charge, and loyally sought Ireland's court
To bring the starry maiden thence, Isonde,—
To set her lustre in Mark's clouded throne,
Her light of joy upon his rayless crown.

Once more, as from the stars, decreed of heaven,
Fortune within misfortune came, now dressed
In war's most dread attire. Ierne's lands,
Within, without, torn, pillaged by ill friends
Worse than her foes,—tormented now by both—
Through these with prowess, diligence, and skill
Tristram, one long twelve months, that year one war,
Subdued where'er he wandered. Never still,
That lion-heartedness which made the realm
A threshing-floor for the fury of his spear,
Till foes were whirled from thence as chaff—ill friends
Curbed, chastened, law-bound in the peace—else, smitten
Dead, ta'en of death where most intent on death.
For this the king, the queen, the realm's estates
Welcomed him to their halls with joyous pomp,
Music, and garlands, and triumphant praise
As ne'er before rang through the hearts and homes
Of haughty, laurelled Ireland. Thus it came,
Our knight-ambassador had gift to mould
His graceless charge into command of grace.
When he must name his boon, he to the king
Full-gazing, calm in aspect, but with voice
Solemn as one renouncing for all years
His best delight,—“From Cornwall have I charge
“To bring thy daughter, that she be its queen.”
Grief smote the court. Belle Isonde's violet eyes—
O, what a heaven of pleading love shone there,

Lovelier, more pitiful, within that shower
Of sacred tears,—spoke to his heart,—but he
Full meekly left the hall.

Whilst king and maid
Fulfilled their sudden woe with weeping sobs
And piteous choking words, around them stole
A breeze of golden sounds—the harp's most high
Immutable language, gentlest tones and strong
To turn the mind from all its dear resolves,
To win from every mood, to every mood,
From smiles to sighs, from mourning unto festal
Merriment. They were soothed, went forth and reached
A myrtle shade, wherein their knight-guest harped ;
And ere the lustrous moon which shone that night
Shed half her silver fire within the dark
Sir Tristram sailed the sea ; La Belle Isonde
His charge with nuptial gifts, herself the gift
Beyond the price of gifts, for Cornwall bound.

Of all the marvels told in prose or song
Of what there happed in Pendragonian times,
Of things mysterious, loving—now appears
That most mysterious, loving, absolute.
The queen, sweet mother of La Belle Isonde,
Disquiet for her daughter's weal, in hours
Secret, when natal stars benignant reigned,
Brewed her a drink which held an amorous charm,
And thus to Isonde's gentlewoman spake :—
“ Brengwain, give heed, that blessings close thy care.
“ See on the bridal-eve that Cornwall's king
“ Partake of this quick draught with our Isonde.
“ Therewith, be sure, a love shall grow between
“ As never known in any royal house.
“ Be wary and be prompt ! ”

The vessel driven,
Storm-caught by night, leagues to the south below

Tintagel, shelters in these flowery isles
Which front the rocky, bare, wave-smitten end
Of Cornwall : and to Tristram's glad surprise
In eye-shot of his native Lyonesse,
Since drawn beneath the ocean waves, its towers,
Fields, palaces, and wealth of mighty life,
Where then his name lived as a guardian spell.

* * * * *
Of sullen brightness, noon, o'er-drowsing all,
As by some sultry toils o'erborne, when he
In fretful humour with these sterile hours
Made speed below—a dolorous haste, to find
The destiny of darkness in the sun—
Searching for cheer. There, Brengwain's cabin door,
Which to and fro swung sleepily, provoked
His questing eye—but ere his outstretched hand
Could reach it, well, too well, he was aware
Half-hidden in a store of silken gifts
There lay a golden flasket. Passing in,
Drawn by the shining object, sense and spirit
Were captive. Carven curiously around,
Beneath, above, the flasket's gold with mystic,
Woven, unintelligible signs, which seemed
Of power and beauty mingled—such as lie
Within the stellar houses, that a man
Unquestioning of astral force is won
To observation, with a dread surmise
Destiny operates in their moving lights :
As lie in flowers, from stigma unto leaf
In form and colour,—so that we exclaim
“O, lovely flower !” all unaware, true joy,—
Of magic resident, the soft mute spell
Kindling the soul,—for science none of man,
May separate the beauty from the signs.
This carven, golden flasket Tristram brought
To Belle Isonde, whose vision strayed from isle

To isle, last rested on the foamless deep.
 "Methinks, the best of cheer our servants hold.
 "This flasket, sure, has bounteous nourishment
 "Worthy its glistening shell," said Tristram. "I,
 "Found it in hiding under Brengwain's care."
 Isonde turned from the sea, to find her sight
 Caught by the flasket, as though she would read,
 Yet failed to read or guess, the hieroglyphs
 Wreathed everywhere throughout the carven gold.
 "Oft have you urged me to demand a boon—
 "And since that much," continued he: "nay all,
 "Of my poor heart shall part for ever from me
 "When we shall part; one hour I would remember,
 "Last shining rubric in our passing love—
 "To other hours as diamond is to sand—
 "One radiant hour, when you vouchsafed my boon—
 "Let me partake this well-kept draught with thee."
 To this Isonde, with moist uplifted eyes,
 Wherein the light of love obscurely shone,—
 "Yea, be it so, with all this heart of mine
 "Which goes with thee whenever thou shalt go."
 He oped the carven flasket and poured forth,
 With gentle hand, the treasured wine, which gleamed
 Golden and danced—a brisk, bright life was in it
 To hold the sight and woo the taste. They pledged.
 The pleasing trouble working in the wine
 Worked swiftly in each heart. Their pledge had been
 Of that love-drink designed, as you have heard,
 By Ireland's queen.

The hair of Belle Isonde,
 Moved over her a moving haze of gold:
 Upon the midnight of her sorrowing soul,
 So spake her eyes, love's day-star brightly rose,
 And Tristram saw her beauty, heard her voice,
 As, ere now, he had never heard or seen.
 He gave the kiss of Rimini—she received—

And love between them, there was evermore.

Unto these twain, in spirit and in sense,
As day is fulfilled of the sun, as night
Is fulfilled of the stars, and spring is fulfilled
Of the primrose and lark, the summer fulfilled
Of the rose—so their love with all of beauty
Of passion and all of pleasure was full
Filled by this mystical flasket of wine,
This golden, and carven, and mystical
Flasket of wine.

Here, as one liege to Love,
I ask the favour of all lovers' thoughts,
I ask the favour of all lovers' shades,
The magic, not the sin, as hath been named,
Known by Francesca from Sir Launcelot's kiss,
I call upon it and the poet's heart
Which made it music : on that name not less,
Poet and lover, whose one word of song
Was Laura—any soul of love reply,
And absolution for this hour is given
Ample as ocean, certain as its tide.

But never yet mere summer-sport was love.
Proportionate sacrifice it shall exact
For every sprinkling of its meed of grace.
Even as they dallied with love's aloe bloom
The south wind stirred. When, promptly, Tristram's voice
Commands the sea-browned mariners hoist sail,
Which answering, as with inborn will, the ship
Speeds from those flowery isles to reach their home
Tintagel. Forth, from paradise of love,
With sharpest speed to sorrow. Known next morn,
Stranded beneath Dunrabin's rocky hold :
A nest of ruffians with more ruffian lord
Whose mirth was misrule, one elect of evil,

Known as they bound and drew to dungeons deep
This company late frolic o'er bright seas
Sailing to greet their welcome ; nor released
Until the guardian-knight evinced his force,
His passion, and his faith, in divers broils
For pleasure of that miscreant chief—pleased first,
But better pleased, anon, to yield a free
Acquittance through a horror of that sword,
That spear, which flamed before him night and day
Slaying his peace, awakening memories
Of murderous years for reckoning ere death's coast
In view.

With gladness from the keep they went.
But whither? Deep in trackless, unkennd ways,
The constant light to which the sphered harp
Of Arthur sings, highest in heaven, sole guide
On all their march—awaited many an eve
For safe direction. Strangely thus they fared
Three fell, bewildered weeks : Tristram ordained
Each breaking morn, or bright or dim, to break
Upon some high adventure, so his love
Should bear the harrying stress of years of dole,
Before he gave his star into the dark
Of other keeping. Fortune then or helped
Or marred, by leading them to friendly paths,
Whereof, King Mark apprised, in haste despatched
Barons and squires, for dignity and pomp
Of chivalry, and to regale their spirits
A minstrel troop approved by voice and lute.
These brought unto Tintagel's rest the twain,
With such a pageantry of arms, such storm
Of musical merriment as its hoary walls
Never afore had wot of.—Five long days,
Horns in the forest, lances in the joust
Gave brave delight throughout the sunshine hours :
At eventime, beneath the summer's heaven,

Soft-stringed instruments with varying song
 Made ravishing cheer : and ere the ancient hold
 Lost feeling of its younger years, King Mark
 Was richly wedded with all nobleness
 To Tristram's love, Isonde.

* * * * *

But high emprise and Tristram form one name.
 Behold at eve, a sombre eve, sad child
 Of golden day, before the gate there stands
 None other than the paynim Palomide.
 Love, or in heathen or in Christian breast,
 Works the same bale or bliss. He, hither drawn
 Because Love will not have it otherwise.
 Had Belle Isonde been hidden deep within
 Matted recesses of the Mercian woods :
 Or, midst the fens of Sessoin been immured :
 Or, lodged within Avilion's cypress bowers :
 There, had this Palomide this instant been
 And not before Tintagel's gate. Urbane,
 Obsequious, captivating sight and ear
 The castle's latest comer : framed by Love
 For all Love's needs, its pleasure or its end.
 Boastful and threatening, one of bloody will,
 When thought Isonde might like enough be wooed
 By force, or pride in force, which she inspired ;
 He now shows tender, odorous, subtle-breathed
 As breeze which creeps along a hawthorn lane
 In white mid-May : a very lady's page
 For low obedience in her flowery pleasaunce,
 Or in the chase, or in the jocund hall—
 Wherein lie waiting birth, new labours sore
 For Tristram, and a warp in life.

Till Yule,
 Till Passion-tide, here rested Palomide.
 Nor wist then Mark, the paynim yet should part,
 Since now it was his kingdom's beauteous time,

Which kept the guest and drew from neighbour-realms
 Knights errant, pilgrims, minstrels, gallant throngs
 From courts and halls ; when spring with cope of blue,
 Spring with its voice of music, and its coat
 Of many colours, told to earth once more
 Gone was another winter's silver strength
 Except for memory's keeping.—Then, arose
 Sounds of dismay amidst Tintagel's bowers.
 Brengwain was fled : nor had the general cry
 Abated, till obsequious Palomide,
 On promised boon, in seven days brought the maid
 For Cornwall's queen.

Boon chosen at twilight time,
 Rich with the breath of pansy and young leaves
 Dew-drenched. That time, Upsala's knight of craft
 Beneath Belle Isonde's balcon then required
 Her promised favour.—Later, in the shades
 Walking the inner court, Sir Tristram saw
 One broad high lattice open, thereby knew
 His fond bird's cage unclosed. Rejoiced in heart,
 Wotting his love awaited sweet " Good night !"
 He blithely sang, for whisper of " Good night."
 No answer : not a chirp : he climbed to find
 No bird—no bird—and yet the oaken door
 Thrice-barred within. What o' the bird ? No guess—
 It has been snared.

Grievous were it to learn
 This new wayfaring, and its labour sore.
 The queen was gone, as wrapped into the dark
 By darksome powers : and Palomide and squire
 Gone,—lost as shades within the shadow of night.
 Manifold terrors haunted Tristram's quest :
 The wolf, the wild-worm, dwellers of the waste,
 On open ways, and lurking in the brake
 Bandits and heathen swords. That haggard search
 Compassed a life of warlike hardihood :

For his great anguish was a constant spur
 Which took rest from him at the golden noon,
 Whilst midnight lacked in him her sleepy dues.
 Belle Isonde's knight pursued them with the sense
 Of passion feverously vigilant,
 Which keeps the trail once found. He overtook
 Palomide, near a willow-shaded fount
 Reposing : challenged him to horse—and drave
 So vehemently, Mark's treasonous guest o'erwhelmed,
 Swooned from the saddle.

This the day far-famed,

Tristram bade Palomide pronounce himself :
 When first this Palomide, with eye on death,
 Avowed untroubled by its fear, the source
 And venture of his heart's regard. “By Thor !
 “Thy spear persuades. Nay, Knight, withdraw thy point ;
 “I falter not. I, of the Aser line :
 “But with report in Odin's iron land
 “Of one whose beauty known as of the sun,
 “To whom as frosted lights all other maids,
 “Upon myself I took this quest of love.
 “Hence, Ireland found me. Hence, found I your queen,
 “Whose look inspires more than the sacred mead
 “Our pontiff-chief, 'neath Upsal's dome of gold,
 “Dispenses at the wreathed shrine when she
 “Iduna, mother of your laughing Spring,
 “Restorer of the flowers of youth to mortals
 “And to the gods, claims every heart to drink
 “Life's joy and hope. It was Iduna's month
 “I raught your queen. To perish in my love,
 “Far sweeter than upright amid the slain
 “The battle-virgins' favour mine. Nay, strike !
 “Strike !—And the pearl-roofed mansion of our skies,
 “Wide-shining Breidablick, receives new guest
 “For Balder to console.” With woe at heart,
 Fresh knight of worth, had life within him slain

By hapless love, Sir Tristram led her back
 Unscarred, unstained, through many a perilous way,
 His queen to weak and wily Mark.

Then love

Took pity on the Lion Knight, his wounds,
 His woeful enterprise, that inward fire
 Consuming, to behold his Beautiful,
 Bride of his heart, bride Beautiful of him
 Who masked all meanness with a kingly name.
 Mysterious Love, working through fortunes ill
 Bestowed its own soft truce, drew him afar
 In peaceful sequestration. Honour's wound,—
 A rueful gash and from a venom'd blade
 Earned in his recent quest—rejecting cure
 From potent simples, needs he must repair
 Fortright to Howell's court in Brittanie,
 Whose daughter in the science of the leech
 Bore high repute—but ah, she bore for him
 Enchantment in the music of her name,
 Which was none other than his queen's—Isonde—
 King Howell's daughter—named of Lily Hands.

* * * * *

Ah, how with Tristram, whose great passionate heart
 Here finds the vital word of his best life,
 Isonde, clothed with such loveliness, the maid
 Might be twin-sister to his Beautiful?
 Ah, this, Love's ordination, soon surmised.
 What with her delicate charms, whose influence worked
 Confederate with the beauty of his queen :
 Gifted devotion through his venomous ill,
 And that her name gave to his heart of love
 Presence and power ; and her observance meek,
 Yet quick, varying in mood with varying need
 Throughout his long recovering hours—these all
 Blending their sway, co-operating, brought
 Tardy acknowledgment from grateful gaze

To language ; thence to reason's deeds. The maid
Became his virgin spouse.

Leavened by his will
She sowed life's graces throughout Brittanie.
Rich in the knight she loved, thence came her boon
Of sunniest years—most joyous, placid years—
Most bright and placid known to Tristram yet.
And, it may be, that their deep peacefulness
Obtained security from tearful prayers
La Belle Isonde sent to her lowering heaven,
When told of Tristram's nuptials. Lorn, but true,
Knowing his love for her, she prayed for him
And his fair consort : did not set her heart
Against him, but at evensong and prime
Prayed that his heart be hardly 'gainst her set,
And that a new love, wider, holier love,
Enrich him with its tokens most divine.
These prayers and tears might have reward to keep
The distant wedded twain as under charge
Angelic : albeit, tears and prayers of her
To whom their answer had undone her more
Than aught beside—plagued, darkened all her hours,
Drained life, and ta'en the light of hope from death.





CHAPTER II.

Heavily leaning upon Brengwain's arm,
La Belle Isonde steps gently towards the grove,
Her fairest pleasaunce, a most inward grove,
Her noontide haunt : behind a lilac bush
Hears rustling garments, noise of flying feet,
And walking round beholds two maids, one churl,
In flight for private entrance to the keep.
Curious, half-roused from out her trance-like mood,
She vainly asks the purpose of that flight :
Then loiters dreamful in the winding paths,
Her eyes in search amidst the border-flowers
For something lost. "Dull and despoiled these walks,
"Sweet Brengwain," murmurs she, pale queen. "All's
changed
"Since heart's-ease died. Would evening's hour were come,
"Then we might hear our nightingale. An yet,
"Our nightingale, methinks, has lost his note
"These many weeks. All's dead-dull now. Our blooms
"Were brighter upon Michaelmas, of yore—
"But, then, all were together. Didst thou say,
"That upon noon may come an instant night ?"
—"No, no."—On this they reached a shrivelled shape
Lain on the grass : a creature ragged, sick
Unto the very death ; found seven days since
At break of morn by Severn's hermit saint.
Thence to Tintagel brought for friendly care—
And here at noon laid in the sun whose beam,
Perchance, may stir the tides of life anew.

The queen's hand tightened on her maiden's arm,
Regarding him as one with winter-thoughts
Regards the ruin of the summer's green
No more returning : upon her he looked,
A mystic knowledge gleaming in his eyes,
As they beheld a something more than seen
By earthly vision—wondrous, unspeakable.
Confused in spirit, unsatisfied, the queen
Drew back, and in a winter-wailing tone,—
“Methinks, that form a-many weeks has drunk
“Of sorrow like to mine, and some fair dame
“Saddens upon his absence. Let us go.”
Yet sought she not her inward grove, but strayed
Forlorn, with earthward searching look : then paused :
Cried in a voice of pain. “That bunch of leaves—
“Those withered leaves—beneath yon thorn—think you,
“Were once my once-dear flower?—Sweet Brengwain, say,
“Now being apart, and here no listening walls,
“When Tristram back from Brittanie, was't one
“Or two his fellows, played upon my pride
“And drave him to the woods?”—“Sir Palomide,
“Sir Kay, two men, but one in evil mind.”—
“Ay, ay ! And they would woo, and I would win
“In fancy, having lost so much in life
“Wearing the name of queen. But, they be gone?”—
“In truth, Sir Tristram gone, for them to stay
“Had been perdition unto court and king,
“So fierce thy spirit”—“Well ! Ah, but not well—
“For him my sun, and I thus desolate.
“So weak, too, from these suffering, palsying months.
“Fever and pain their tabernacle long
“Have made this quivering frame—Thou, surely, sweet,
“Hast seen our knightly star of late—or wast
“In dream I learned of it?”—“Yea, but in dream.
“Yet, guided as by dream, I found his haunt,
“A forest, guarded by an iron keep,

“Where, two years gone, the heathen Palomide,
“For gain of thee, foughten his angriest fight
“With Tristram; who, that victory won, his rest
“Took with the castle’s dame. He, as he healed,
“Taught her most featly and most prettily
“To harp. He left her wiser in that art
“Which wisely she has kept. Thus, led by me,
“Her music found thy knight and drew him forth,
“Captive of harmony, unto her home,
“Wherein his soul gat peace. But for three days,
“Misfortunes crossed her—then, the lady’s touch
“Failed at the fount of melody and health,
“And by the demon of his madness borne
“Into the icy dawn and shroud of mists,
“Tristram—nor rested, as I wot, until
“The forest’s thorn-embrangled inmost heart
“Held him lone guest of sorrow as before,”—
“—O woe, O misery! Of all mankind,
“Lovers have sharpest doom—not one hath joy
“Of those that thou hast named.—Brengrwain, be sure,
“That withered man no long time since hath been
“Somewhat a pleasure to the sight—aye, aye—
“With nobleness of frame and might of limb.
“My dream-wrought mind! The heart’s-ease.—O, this
heart!
“Brengrwain, be we all dying? Dimly sense
“Recalls the darling flower.—That withered man,
“His former life within me as a dream
“Floats dimly. Strange—that withered man, near death,
“Seems, like the flower, familiar once; again,
“My cozening memory fails—the flower—the flower—
“His face?” She paused, self-questioning—“His face,
“Is as the face of one whom I have seen
“In many places.” Here a hopeless moan
Spake from her heart. Silence some moments—then,
“Hist, Brengrwain. Hast thou ever loved?”—“Yea, queen.”

"—And does Love wander wild, as I have talked ?"
" I never knew my state in love, sweet queen.
" Your words are very words of love. My ease
" Of heart would perish in a night. Ay, lover
" Be nought of lover on a syllable.
" 'Tis like nought else."—" Ah, Brengwain, now I think—
—" How sweet to feel one's memory hold again—
" Did I not question thee—or should have done—
" Upon Love's instant ?"—" Yesternorn, we spake—
" And now thou bringest me again to talk on't :
" Whenas, I least would have of hope—in years,
" Years long, long past—of love and lover—one
" And both would shine.—O, those sweet years long past—
" More beautiful than in the spring o' love."
—" Such things then come again. I, too, have found
" That love may in a moment shew new season.
" I ne'er was told—but know—its summer dies
" With all its sighing autumn in an hour :
" Then the cold, deathly winter—deathly cold,
" And long."—Brengwain cried out.—" However long,
" It yields to spring on the instant of a smile.
" There is the word you asked for, my sweet queen."
—" Months, months, I deem, have passed. And may that
instant
" Come here?—to me ?"—" It may."—" What time, sayst
thou ?"
—" For life, sweet queen."—" Nay, that was not thy word.
" I said months, months—you spake of an instant—ah,
" That instant of spring-birth, may not the months
" Black, icy months in which we now be bound,
" Strangle it ? Ware you, Brengwain, that of love
" Only one thing is certain unto all :
" Being not, it shall not be, though angels crave it :
" And being, as certain as it once was not
" Time comes it shall not be. There's all."—" Nay, nay !

"Within the radiance of that instant's life
"The past is as the past of night at dawn,
"Forgotten : the present, glory ; and the future
"Secure, serene." Thus Isonde with her maid
Along the pleasaunce-walks with frequent sighs,
Talked as is need of those of highest place
In grief with faithful servitors—the heart
Being everywhere in everyone the same—
And fellowship of sorrow makes us one.

Listless, a few steps onward : then, the queen
Looked on the shrivelled shape again, which lay
With close-shut eyes, and motionless.—"How still
"He lies, as now in the extremity
"Of quiet death," whispered La Belle Isonde.
But scarcely had she wandered three spears' length
Beyond the man, when her full heart brake forth.
"O, Brengwain, Love is very life, I see.
"We'd better love a withered man like that
"Than have no love at all. And, yet, my knight
"Was glorious as an angel : ever the same
"Unto my soul, as when in Ireland's jousts—
"Our Tristram ! Grace of arms ! Our Lion Knight !
"Our Light of Honour !"—In her passion's pause
She heard a cry. "Hark, Hodain finds me here,
"With voice I ever loved next to his lord's."
She turned. She saw with wild amaze her hound
Leaping around the man—no hand, nor brow,
Nor cheek it left unvisited : and then recalled,
Hodain had never left her save for one,
But for that one would ever leave her side,—
He who had given the hound. Nor could she speak,
Nor move, La Belle Isonde : and on her, lo,
The man's eyes opened : knew she wept : and tears
Can cleanse the foulest wound—and at the sight
His soul healed, and his life gat strength—upsprang

Sir Tristram—caught her—pressed her heart to heart.
 And voice was gone from both : and best for both
 A sobbing silence.—Thus, again, the pair
 Came to each other : thus the Spring o' Love
 Vanquished the winter in an instant's space.

* * * * *

Long,

She hung upon him as a wilding flower
 Hangs on a castle's ruins beautiful
 And beautifying. After parley sweet—
 How long they might not know, since Time's fleet wing
 Swept past so softly then—with knightly step
 Tristram withdrew to seek his bower. He gone,
 The queen with questioning melodious voice
 To Brengwain. "Hath the season changed? Your eye
 "Speaks wickedly. You may lack grace o' love,
 "Yet, let me kiss thee. Thou wert ever kind,
 "And hast forgiveness.—Of a truth, the light
 "Grows lovelier in the day : and my heart sings
 "Sweetlier unto me than might any bird.
 "The scant flowers smile ! and, look, that willow branch
 "Beckons to yonder thorn : and whispers,—hark,—
 "In every bush, to bid hearts'ease upraise
 "Its eye of blue again. Yet tell me, truly,
 "Brengwain, dear soul, has it for once been so
 "These many, many months?"—"Yes, lovelier far
 "To lovers with Love's summer in their souls,
 "And nought to cross them."—"Thou art envious, pert,
 "Petulant. A surly maid. Must ever lack
 "Love's grace. Go ! Lead me to my bower. Pray, let
 "Thy face wear the true colour of thy heart,
 "Show not the shine of happiness you know not,
 "But take its proper sable." Haughtily,
 Strode Belle Isonde as more than queen that hour :
 Triumphant royally in her knight returned.

Tintagel's knight now here, a double pride
Guerdon'd Mark's liberal pains. 'Twas vastly strange
The history of the madman : then 'twas fine
Self-satisfaction to bestow his care
On soul so desolate, whereon rang praise
Full-voiced from Cornwall's nest of dissolute peers.
And when the lion knight in time assumed
The lion's port, between the four broad seas
What potentate could claim such arm of faith,
And iron will for functions of the field ?
Not long, this blithe content. Barons and squires—
Mark's revelling, craven, shrewd and rare, long-pledged
Companions whilst Sir Marhaus held his gate—
Their owlsh spirits could not brook the light
Of Honour shining in their purlieus. Soon,
Mark's double pride was flustered into hate.
Whispering of Honour night and noon, wrought heat
Of spirit, but when barbed hints and looks,
Slanting at queen and lion-knight, were caught
By Mark in jealous phrensy, men might wot
Fate then abridged a noble life.—Soon done,—
Within Tintagel's dungeons—or, her waves
Were ready to receive and hide the dead.
But no—fear rules the raging heart—there lived
Camelot's peerage, first estate of arms :
The vengeance, when to Launcelot's heart went up
The cry of Tristram's blood—therefore, his doom,
Away, exiled from Cornwall's boundaries,
Despised, affronted, roving knight-of-green,
For twice five years. Worse news had never struck
Sir Tristram's soul—and with a voice of tears,
He mourned of his large worship shown to Mark,
Much known to all, but much untold, unknown.
Sleepy neglect forbore to speak of much
And envy hath its silence.

That o'erpast,

The fields of Logris called, awaiting him
With other thoughts and hopes, with other fields
For fame. The knight-of-green's adventurous hand
Still strenuous through the righteous wrath of love—
Since Belle Isonde within his bosom lived
As all of love in love's own powers and flame
Exceeding, and impelled to deed sublime,
Chastening or hallowed, or by arms or song,
Achieved.

But for herself, the Beautiful,
Rest none for her—and of her hot unrest
Brenghwain would find for her its errant cause :
And on report of Logris, as domain
Renovate by his roaming enterprise,
Through perils, here not to be rehearsed, but dire,
She found the steerage of his path, and last,
Found him, the knight, in slumber near a spring—
Sate softly by his side, and kept her heart
In patience till he woke, when she resigned
Letters of grace from her, his ladye-love.

The Dragon King, that time, from Camelot
Let cry a solemn three days' tournament
For Maidens' Castle. Mindful, Tristram held
The news in keeping. Upon loneliest hours,
Gladdened his spirit with the fire of hope
Bethinking of the promise of that day.
This told he Brenghwain, with request "Sweet dame
"An thou wilt thither with me?"—"Ay, my lord,
"Or whither thou mayst lead, if going I save
"My lady's heart from sorrow, or yield her joy
"To know thy worship."—"Sorrow none for us,
"When heart doth write these letters brought by thee,
"And letters have the welcome of such heart
"As tells thee now its joy. Thither, with me
"The gainest way which brings us to behold

"The famous fellowship of the Table Round,
"Brave emulation in the Table Round,
"The sun and centre of the Table Round,
"Arthur, and in her throne queen Guinevere."

O, vanity of Love ! he spoke the maid ;
He brought the maid to Maidens' Castle jousts—
For why ? Scarce heard as whisper in his heart ;
It was, that seeing nobleness of knights
And ladies beautiful beyond men's praise,
Proclaim his valour, Brengwain soon should bring,
For hearing of Isonde, report with wit
Particular to time, display, and deed.
But when this of the maiden, seen and heard,
Her heart sank, never having yet conceived
Such glory, beauty, power. All those three days,
Her heart, as in a marvellous vision endured
Such terror for his weal, and, O, such pangs
Of sudden amazing joy, when she beheld
Time after time, his argent lion flare
Before the lists—then the career, the clash,
And prouder for the shock ride forth, his faith
His honour, valour, crowned again. Yea, fear
Darkened her whilst his prowess kept each day.
Was one so terrible, lord of the jousts,
Crimson from helm to stirrup, truly knight
So debonnair, so gentle in his grace,
Single and simple in his love, as known ?
Found in such thought, a giant knight rode in,
Claiming to break a lance. With sea-like voice,
Scornful he cried : " From Cornwall's court I come—
"Confess its queen, Isonde, excelling aught
"Of any dame of any knight ; announce
"My purpose ! Save her rightful king, shall none
"Exceed my worship : none divide my claim,
"And here, by me, the lion shall be quelled."

Then Brengwain knew who came as from the shades,
Knight of the King of Terrors,—Palomide,
As he no less in darkest passion came,
With sable panoply on sable steed,
As ever in his quest, to drive to doom
All valour that stood thwart his love, or dulled
His worship of Isonde. This Brengwain knew,
And knowing swooned. Her wakening eyes surveyed
In fear the lists below—so long her swoon
The knights had evenly proved two careers,—
Now came the third. Or e'er he placed his lance
In rest, Sir Tristram raised him on his steed,
Stretched forth his arms, as though in previous fray
He had been idler, and his limbs of might
Ached for due action. Then, the thunderous course—
On which, midway, the shattering shock spread wide
The splinters of the spears. With speed of flame
Tristram laid hands upon his foeman's shield
Burst every strap—upon his charger's mane
Laid prone the knight of Upsal's head, then swift
With shield smote, stunned him—hurled the shield to earth—
Caught at his helm, brake all its brazen bands,
With helm showered wrathful perilous blows—so, bruised,
Bloody, as dead, the peer of Odin sank
Unhorsed, last tribute to that day of deeds,
Since none, of fifty unbreathed knights, none now
Dare trace the field. The last dread day had closed—
Tristram each day of all those three dread days,
Master of the degree.

Yet with default.—

In fortune's frolic, shorn of fortune's grace.—
He came not to dismount, as no knight came
Master of the degree, ere comes a knight
On lusty stammel steed with chiming pace,
Clad in carnation-coloured arms, all o'er
Beset with golden sprays : upon his helm

Spruce sprays of gold in bloom, with shield's device
One golden blooming spray, and nuts of gold.
His open visor shows a countenance
Lightening with crafty humours, which restrain
The glooming heart of Brengwain, as a torch
Acquires with light within a cave the space
Of darkness it is conquering. Hark, the steed
Caracoles blithely to its master's wit,
Which tells that in the knight's appointments lie,
Of silver sound some scores of hidden bells
Ringing unto the caracole. Then rose
From knight, and clown, and laughing voice of dame—
“Now, comes the singing-tilt of Dinadin.”
The sturdy stammel steed of Dinadin
Sprang as to get a forward grip of earth,
Whereon it held. The lion like the wind,
Or whirlwind towards him—missed in his attaint—
Flew back from spear of Dinadin, as he
By naught but violence of his whirlwind speed
Were blown from saddle. Ere the foiled knight rose,—
Ringing alway, as though the chivalry
Of Camelot had voice in scornful song,
Dinadin forth had sped, had flown the lists,
With cry, “I ask no blood.” So is it told,
These tilting times lacked not their special play
To ease the crimson passions of the joust.

Brengwain returned with news, she interwove
Such praise of Dinadin within her speech
And of the singing-tilt, her mournful queen
Impassioned bade her exorcise his name
From history of that jousting—but when all
The puissance, the courtesy of those days
Was heard, rightway that simple heart of love
Swooned in her ecstasies of joy.

No need

In her estate for wonder. Lovers' news
 At any time are powers—in misery,
 As fallen now upon the Beautiful,
 Love's loving news dash down the heart grown weak,
 Through abstinence of joy with suffering.
 Suffering? Ay, Mark ere this had made well-known
 Beyond surmise, his mean, malignant self.
 His ruthless humour grew with passing weeks.
 None, in the misrule of his court might blame
 Or warn him : one and all in love alike
 And wisdom scant. Last, in his scornful hate
 Bestowed on Belle Isonde, her lord displayed
 Polluted taste, a riotous wantonness,
 As though each sorry portion of his guilt
 Of foulness, was more precious from the foil
 Of foulness to the sweetness of his queen :
 As, though her hurt and sorrow from his guilt,
 Gave to it pleasure's daintiest sting.

With arm

Free to his twofold cause, now Tristram fared
 Once more the Knight of Love : high Honour's beam
 Bare through shy noisome ways, till on an eve
 Fog-darkened, weary, and misled, he found,
 Deep in the quaking lands of Rueful Dale,
 Lodgment within a hold of mystery.
 There for a season cloistered, bondsman held
 Of wildest witch that ever wore the form
 And beauty of a woman—Morgan le Fay—
 His faith was brought to proof. Ah, but his love
 Moved not from Belle Isonde. The dazzling witch,
 Her wiles, her potions, glamour in her gaze,
 Stirred not his fealty. * * * *

Abrupt the end,
 Blasting enchantment, drawing the far sound
 Of the world's voices full upon his soul :
 Sanguine that end and sudden, when in mail

The lady's paramour, her confrere tried
 In love's expedients and designs of death,
 Sought to conclude with Tristram in her grove,
 Whose leaves and blossoms had sweet nourishment
 From hearts beneath—brave, bounteous, and renowned
 Lured hither, buried here. The mailed man
 With words of shame, shamed her—Morgan le Fay—
 As stings to rouse the peer—unsheathed his brand
 As for immediate outrage. Then, the knight
 Held breath in anguish. "Surely this be stain
 "Upon the virtues of the dame"—that thought
 Illumined him with honour's light, he saw
 Only a slanderous, intrusive churl—
 Leapt on him : from his gauntlet's nerveless grasp
 Wrenching the blade, he clove him to the breast.
 Cloven the charm. One thought, one stroke—the life
 Of bestial churl—and cloven was the charm.
 A wakening stroke : a judgment flash had been
 The swift white lightning of his flying sword :
 And blood of evil broke the evil spell,
 And strong and clear of inward vision now,
 Still Knight of Honour, Tristram stood. His bane
 Furnished new trophy for his trust in love.

* * * * *

Led by that faith in Love, his venturous way
 Straight tended to the fair Memorial Stone
 Near Camelot, long years desired as place
 Dedicate to the sacrifice of love,
 Best place for heart sick-sorrowing.

Gazing there,

O'er its white marble, crossed with crimson streak,
 Significant of radiant loves there slain,
 There resting—old and memorable words
 Of Merlin, from the bud of prophecy
 Burst into blossom.

Hither, rode this time

Sir Launcelot of the Lake : and now was fought,
Unknown of each, that fight of spear and sword,
These gone, the struggle hand to hand, each gripe
Keen as the fang of death. Had bard been there,
That crested hour were more than Roncesvalles
In battle-blast of song. Then each confessed
Name to each other, and in knightly love
Paced to the hallowed stone, where kneeling, both
Made covenant of faithfulness and gave,
Last token of consummate knightlihood,
Matchless degree unto each other. Thus,
Blossomed the words of Merlin's wintry years.
Beside that white Memorial Stone, there met
"The two best knights in all King Arthur's days
"And truest lovers known in any land."

Now Launcelot's mind, wot that an hour was born
Pre-eminent for worship : that on him
Was laid the charge of glory to induct
Tristram into that final avenue
Which brings the knight to be true child of fame.
Hence, unto Arthur's court he drew his fere,
Saluted with a jubilation as ne'er
Before that day in Camelot, or known
After, in Pendragonian times. Once there,
Arthur with pomp and honours brought our knight
To seek the Table Round. With him, approached
Guinevere, in her lustre, damsels, peers,—
Soft-shining Pleiades of beauty, bands
Chivalrous, whose appointments, gleaming shewed
Various device of shield. Then Guinevere
Cried, "Welcome !" answering, "Welcome !" cried the
dames :
"Welcome !" the damsels : thrice the silver cries
Against the clanging "Welcome !" of the knights.
Uprose, the trumpet-greeting of the king,

Whereon the signet of his tongue fulfilled
The vehement joyaunce :—" Welcome ! to our court,
" One of earth's best and gentlest knights, be thou !
" Great hunter of the heathen !—from three realms
" Thrusting their fierce invading hosts. In chase,
" Bearer of chiefest prize ! The bugle horn,
" Of all its choicest measures : terms of sport,
" By hawk, and hound, and spear, beginner thou !
" Of all the mystery by river's marge :
" Of all the mystery in woodland ways,
" Pursuit in air, field,holt, thou president !
" Knight of most worship ! we confess and laud
" Thee for thy dues : and, as exceeding other claim,
" Thou music's great magister ! Voice nor hand,
" Like thee hath stirred the spirit's melody,
" Whence are begotten thoughts assuming oft
" Wilful predominance, we lose the sense
" For that indwelling music whence evolved.
" Then, welcome ! Gentlest knight—of noblest deed,
" Of song, master and lord ! Of noblest deed,
" Love, courtesy, liege vassal, and yet lord
" Puissant ! Welcome !"

This being heard, with haste
The martial Order ranged the Table Round.
And Arthur looked on every seat there void,
And one siege lacked its living knight,—that knight
Foiled by young Tristram in his virgin fray
Of knighthood 'neath Tintagel's walls—the siege
Of Marhaus. Whereupon, the Order's king
Declared the morrow's business, when the tromp,
Brought towards the dragon-throne—imperial work
Of marvellous device from Merlin's hand,
Which raised high o'er its royal seat the head
Vengeful, with flickering tongue and blood-red eyes,
And wound behind the king with folds of steel
Rough-sparkling, and flat underneath his feet

Laid broad its tail endued with arrowy sting ;
So Arthur sate as there upon his throne
Protected by the beast, his dragon-helm
Bickering, as though in wrath, himself a fear,
Dragonish to every foe of law or faith ;
Around him, on this throne, by sound of tromp
Gathered the pageantry of Table Round,
With priests and saintly servitors in choirs,
At spring of day. Then to the minster porch.
By hoar, divine Dubricius, there received :
Hence led to the high altar, midst the noise
Of instrument and song in psalmody
Of praise, and incense fumes, with fragrant wreaths
Filling the temple ; there, intoned the mass,
Succeeded by the service of the sword,
The oaths of chivalry, the sacred charge—
With benediction, whereupon heaven's hosts
Raise their hosannas for the goodly time
The knight shall strive for on the earth appears—
And welcome of that hour, his good fight fought,
He join the bands celestial. Arthur, then,
With state illustrious, adjudged the knight
Worthy the vacant siege, with accolade
Of resonant voice confirmed, invested him
With due insignia of the Table Round.

Closed these solemnities, through knightly throngs,
Whose panoply of bright incessant flashed
Fresh splendours into morn, there mingled groups
Of fair and sweet, like blooms of garden blown
By gentle winds. All day, there intervened
High tournament of young, and brave and gay,
With minstrel sport which winged the golden hours
With laughing joy.—Such martial nobleness,
Such consecrating pomp, such merriment,
Closed with proud feasting, used the Dragon King
When Tristram entered siege of Table Round.



CHAPTER III.

This was the spring, with music overflown,
Flower-starred, and odorous as any spring
That smiled across the Logrian isle, or since,
Or ever shall when we are all forgotten.

* * * *

Days pleasantly grew into weeks, the weeks
To months, which slid apace with shining feet
Until within the autumn time there slept
A sabbath's lustre upon Camelot.
A day of peace and praise.—What thunderous noise
Travels the vale in haste towards Camelot?
Mark and his knights!—who reck not of the day,
Its dedication, nor the faith whose peace
Enwraps this evening's hour. With pagan sneer
Riding at morn, he cried,—“ This day, fools know,
“ Adopts the sun : and, so, but shine the sun
“ To us ripe time to speed our enterprise.
“ Matins to-morrow of the sword and spear.”
Hence, came the hoofs of these hard-breathing steeds
Of Cornwall and his troop, led by himself
Clanging to Camelot ; with grace received
By Arthur and the Order of the Ring,
At close of evensong.

At large, had Mark
Heard of Sir Tristram's worshipful estate,
The Dragon King's esteem, Sir Launcelot's love,
Regard of Guinevere, and Logrian fame

Blown by the wind throughout the land's resorts.
 Whereon, his wrath turned from his queen awhile.
 Despite the lion's lance, and of its sword
 Mindless, he brought his retinue to seek
 Favour of evil in the tournament.
 Short-coming there, his evil confidence
 Full store possessed of foul dishonouring tales
 Particular in poisonous hint—or, last,
 None better than this heart of fraud, was schooled
 In mission of the hidden steel.

But, lo,
 What change upon that self-same sabbath's night,
 And days succeeding! Cornwall had receipt
 Of bounteous, general greeting, courteousness,
 Simplicity of elegance in act,
 Imperial consideration, meek,
 Mutual, cementing ranks from churl to queen,
 That in the sharp air of the chivalrous court
 The habit of Mark's mind endured a change—
 Passion of peace, of gentleness the power
 Known now in Mark, and Arthur had his vow
 Within Tintagel pure and lofty life
 Should be sustained. A vow, his noblest given,
 Soon secretly unsworn, although its gloss
 Held Cornwall still as one redeemed to eyes
 Unsharpened by suspicion, blind in trust.

* * * *

Within the noiseless chariots of the clouds,
 The spirits of night drave to the setting sun,
 And brought for him an hour unsought, prepared
 By evil minds. Within a lonely glade,
 Rambling in thought, Mark was aware of twain
 Conversing as in grief, who won delight
 On his approach. Mordred and Vivien these,
 And he their prey. That nephew of the king
 Mordred, within the court a secret tongue,

Moving with creeping step and humbled face,
 Alive to everything : the fiend in need,
 Acknowledging the heaven he had foregone
 And sought to discompose : Mordred, a name
 Of shame and death :—Vivien, of wanton gaze,
 On Merlin, late withdrawn to hermit cell
 As done with life, but prescient that his life
 Would strangely suffer from a damsel's wiles ;
 Prescient a seeming silent tongue would strike
 Ruin on glory of the state—a step
 Noiseless was creeping upon Arthur's fame,
 Nor long to speed him to the silent shores—
 Merlin, whose spring of three-score years was gone
 And all his mighty summer, now a seer
 Hoary, a memory clothed with poësy—
 On him intent Vivien, the winsome fair,
 Patient his fated, long-deferred return
 Awaiting—but, meanwhile, kept her in play :
 With frivolous, perilous thoughts in ward, ne'er found
 Idling in toils of blame : or fishing she,
 Or mending of her nets, was always found.
 Now, her resolve dight her in crimson gleams :
 Soft blush of wilding rose at morn, this hour
 Of eve brought cramousie, for love's desires
 Fancy's best fashion, and to Cornwall's eyes
 An amorous trouble. Either spake to Mark
 In interchange of comment : Mark replied—
 Of scandals of the court, of knights, of dames
 And wrongs of Mark.—Disloyal speech conceived
 Of hate, had brood of murderous thoughts : delight
 Of death, came of this intercourse.

Days died,
 Days rose, and rising now, bright broke the day
 Mark shall depart, when faithful to the vow
 Kept unto knights and dames, he asks a boon
 As sealing vow : that, for Tintagel's aid,

In pure and lofty life there be conjoined
Sir Tristram—boon upcast on Arthur's wish—
“ Let men be in accord, all will be well :
“ Without they are accorded, nought is well.”
But Launcelot feared for Tristram, feared King Mark,
His dungeons and his secret ministers,
So spake against the temper of his king,
Clear, resolute—drew his anointed sword,
Thrice waved it o'er his head as sacred sign,
Thrice kissed its hilt, as token of the cross,
Therewith, to pledge his worship and his soul,
Should harm befall Sir Tristram on such choice,
Affliction should befall to Cornwall's land
Beyond the scath of heathen or of plague.
Nor trusting to his minatory words,
Nor awe, as told the pallor of the kings,
Launcelot besought his first beloved of knights,
In knightly faith and Love's obeisance, wait
Here in the circuit metropolitan :
Oft, honour calls to hold the kingdom's fame
'Gainst paynim prowess : here, due residence
For faith and valour ; else, let Tristram seek
Emprise promiscuous amidst the wilds
Of lands beyond the seas—only, with Mark
Forbear to go. Not to Tintagel—no.
On which with slow, half-weeping voice replied
The heart-struck knight of war, “ My brother, mine,
“ By all that makes our Order as the stars
“ Of honour unto dark humanity :
“ By all the worship shewn in pageants played,
“ Or stiff-fought fields, for favour or defence
“ Of ladye-love, my brother, I must go !
“ More than to leave the lists of Logris, more,
“ Than here renounce the glory-lighted realms
“ By paynims held, is to lose thee. Yet still,
“ I go. Their wish is mine : its home is here

"And resting place." Gently, with head abased,
 He laid his palm above his heart. "Here, home
 "Of all the kingly wish : though well you wit,
 "Upon an issue of mine own I go.
 "Angels are with us all : but none, the chief
 "Gabriel, Archangel, bearer of the divine
 "Decrees, may ever bind or loosen love.
 "The sorrow in my loss of thee foregone,
 "This heart exults with joy. Thou knowest love.
 "So bound, so burdened, yet so light of heart,
 "Always our case when ladye-love in view.
 "Yet,—nay—without the sight of Belle Isonde,
 "My spirit may not endure." And from that hour,
 Till darkness brought him light, he knew not Mark,
 From his own eye, or from the voice of friend,
 But kept his faith in king, and served him well,
 Soul-blind through his o'er-quicken'd sense of love.

The winter gone, a damsel from Isonde—
 Brengwain, it was, once more—reached Camelot
 At glow-worm time, when midst the evening shades,
 First seen its lamp of love. Hers, news of joy :
 Letters for Arthur, Launcelot, Guinevere,—
 Letters affecting Mark, Isonde, their weal,
 And Tristram's ; unto most, a resonant joy.
 But twain found in her news a hate disguised,—
 Arthur and Launcelot. These apart communed,
 Shadows upon the common joy : whence came
 An answer royal, one of kindly words
 Yet bearing thought, as of Sir Tristram's weal
 Doubtful but heedful.

Now it was, the worm
 Disclosed his fang before the open day.
 Sting, poison went together and at once.
 Mark's answer, as with haste of wings, arrived,
 The first jar in the music of his life,

Puissant, pure, high-hearted, gentle, proud
And guileless Arthur :—" As we are, we are.
" I bid thee intermit thee with thyself,
" And wife and knight : as for myself, the power
" I ever had, have now, will ever have
" To rule and keep a wife."

The house of hell

There threw its lurid light on hidden ways
Known not to Arthur's generous, trustful mind—
Which knew alone what honour's sun revealed,
Fair, simple paths on which none went astray.
And as Mark's words of searching fire would burn
Ceaseless within his brain, as clouds on clouds
Rolling and gathering, darkening evils came
In deepening folds, O, that imperial soul
Felt, O, such sadness ! O, such loneliness !
Slackened his spirit, that he may nor write,
Nor think reply to Cornwall : and his throne
Suffered besieging sorrows, till that fray
Adder-begotten, and of Mordred's work,
Roared through the misty noon, and Arthur's realm
With evening sank in silence by the sea,
And Arthur's saintly soul found final peace.

But, now, a counter-stroke from Dinadin—
Returned from lengthy embassy—gay sprite.
Ay, certes, as his name rings when ye read
Or hear, his nature tallied with his name.
He was the merry-making knight within
The Table Round—all hurry, sparkle, song.
And, now, an apparition from the halls
Dedicate to victorious mirth, made fly
Arrows of scornful laughter, and re-lit
The courtly joyaunce. Jaunty muse being his,
Half-pique, half-love, with speedy offspring fit,
In homage to the royal grief—the child,

A ballad to King Mark : its name, a shaft
That pierced, "Mark is my mark." Whereon, he called
His harper Elyot, taught him harp this lay—
Ordained him other harpers,—but, enow,—
Sir Dinadin within his ballad verse
Retorted on Mark's shame a sixfold shame
In phrase so forceful still it lives renowned,
"Worst lay that ever harper sang with harp."

When Elyot reached Tintagel there to harp
The waspish lay, Sir Tristram then had cleansed
Cornwall from foes once more. Once more, not one
In Cornwall's buffoon chivalry gave word
Of courage ; and the scourge of sword and fire
By Sessoin's raging bands, the dread White Horse,
Christ's bane, the pagan's iron pride, for long
Kept still the music of Sir Tristram's hand—
The lion knight, once more, in fate of arms
Tintagel's help ; through strengths of love and faith
The bastion of her towers.

Great Sessoin's lord

He met in view of either host : when sate
The seigniories of knights to taste the fray ;
In midst of Cornwall's powers, its king : with him,
His queen, the Beautiful, unto the gaze
Of Sessoin's peerage a most marvellous light
Of loveliness. Each knight her every grace
Computed at war's value : favouring smile,
Well-worth a spear-thrust : and that shining cloud
Which dimmed her diadem, that affluent hair
Dazzling, one lock of it well-worth the price
Of venturous quest from Candlemas to Yule :
No soul of Sessoin's barbarous horde but owned
Presence of one of those fine beings rare
Amidst the cloudy centuries they gild,
Well-worth the hazard of a kingdom's rule.

Prompt at the hour of tierce, Sir Ælias rode,
 His purport shown in sable panoply,
 Straight to the tourney's eastern gate, and there
 Paused. La Belle Isonde's beauty on his tongue
 Silenced the challenge. But by herald's voice
 Drawn from his fantasy, his sanguine ire
 Re-doubled, Ælias shouted o'er the lists—
 "Fair knight, at thy pavilion this dawn
 "With my spear point, good iron of Poictou,
 "I touched thy shield. Thou knows't my purpose—death!"
 "I answer to the utterance," Tristram cried.
 "Our orisons are told, but with the dirge
 "My tears will be required for thee. Fair knight,
 "Now thy devoir."

* * * * *

* * But Tristram wist not, yet

True danger was to come. This Sessoin's lord,
 Man in the height of arms was he : inspired
 By passion of the war, he was enriched
 With skill and hardiment. On this third bout,
 Both spears were splintered, both knights fell unhorsed.
 But fallen not their spirits : with their swords
 They fought as there had been a flaming fire
 Encompassing. They fenced, they foigned—keen, quick,
 Stout strokes of nimblest play : traced, traversed, hot
 As wild stags full of autumn blood provoked
 In lordship of the hind. Hauberk and helm
 Hewn roughly : shorn, huge cantles of their shields—
 Their doughten deeds surpassed all learned from voice,
 Or scroll, of fairy land or chivalry.

Now crimson fall the sands of Tristram's life.
 Faint from the heat and anguish of the fray
 His head droops o'er his shield : the draught of death
 Proposed for Ælias, Tristram's parting soul
 Longs to partake, as o'er his eyes descend

Shades, closing all the bright and noisy scene,
This dread imperial debate, transact
For Mark and Cornwall, and the lists of love,
Late glorious, with the queen of every heart
Presiding. Then, a mocking laughter sprung
From galleries westward, keener than the edge
Of sword or glaive to Tristram, as he felt
His knighthood was the gazing stock of fools,
Who judge not of event but of the chance.
Awakening sounds.—His soul creeps from the swoon
To feebly grasp at life. Uncomforted,
And cold, he wots that hosts with revelling jeers
Witness his yielding strength : whilst others mourn
Doom falling darkly on their lion knight.
On Isonde's throne, he there beholds a face
Pale, with its eyes afire, and o'er it hang
Cumbrous and dun her tresses in the bright
Slant sunshine. Harken, Love's power, once again !—
He notes upon her rose-bereaved, worn cheek,
Flashing a sacred and peculiar light,
Tears of wild sorrow, whereupon his soul
Drank courage from them, cast aside the robes
Of palsying faintness, fear and pain.—More brief
Than this brief verse, such fury in his change,
Sir Tristram's finish of the fight. His sword
Flew on his foe : a score of blows for one
Confused the lord of Sessoins ; from their force
The shield brake on his arm—his hauberk pierced,
Oped entrance to his heart, his helmet cloven
Brought death on death—to the beholder's gaze
Æliás seemed smitten everywhere at once.

For all of this, despiser of true worth,
Worship of arms, renown, fidelity,
Mark, when he heard the song of Dinadin
Mark would have slain his champion-knight, sole stay

Of throned authority, the warden spear
 Of his dominion. And when Elyot's lay
 Was harped and sung before the languid court,
 Mark blazed in angered words—but softly ends,
 “Name him who sends thee, and we hide our time
 “For chastisement.” But Elyot as he heard,
 Bore heedless gaiety of look, and thrummed
 An under-note, and gazing on the ground,
 Spake as a harper in the privilege
 Of song accorded everywhere. “The name
 “I serve beneath?—One you affect, sweet king—
 “Sir Dinadin, most debonair of knights,
 “My lord, my gentlest lord is Dinadin.
 “An, wit ye well, I am a minstrel, sire,
 “One who must sing the songs made by his lord
 “As he must wear the arms his lord doth wear.”

Thus, Mark the king, the king but newly saved,
 Clothed in fair silken raiment, and his word
 Soft as the chime for vigils, but within
 Dead spirit cased in thrice-proof mail of self
 Played the knave-king. For, this time, Tristram lay
 Close chamber-prisoned, sore with many wounds
 Begat from Ælias, known when careful leech
 Found harness of the war to bring more hurt
 Than it might save from. Silken, chiming Mark,
 His trailing step now haunts the corridors
 ’Tween the sick room and feasting hall, morn, noon,
 And midnight—kindly in his watch, with heed
 In all required for Tristram's tourney-hurt
 And fever—till his time was come. Then, haste—
 When time was come.

Knights, dames, intent on mirth,
 Warily brought was Tristram, one still eve,
 Through dense dusk woods, lone fields, by moorland heights
 And craggy pass : lodged in a lonesome keep,

Fore-fronting sea, with rear of splintered cliffs,
Flanked, south and north, with black, sharp, high-heaped
rocks,

With torrent of its own, whose ceaseless shout
Would drown the noise of battle though hard by.
Thus safely brought and lodged, from potion sooth
Three nights, two days, he fell on sleep, and then
Awoke in darkness.—Well, was Tristram, here,
Withdrawn from notice of his fellowship :
In changeless night imprisoned : this his grave,
Deep in the heart of the wild water's cry,
Far-hid from any quest, or guess of friend.

Nothing of Tristram, now, from Mark but pride
Through this event. He, dungeoned to await
The hour when Mark should end his earthly hours,
Awoke Mark's pride in other hate and love :
Outspoken at the feast when courtly tongues
Talked Camelot—and, there—now, here—now, round—
Flew whispers, with eye-wantonness, when named
One maiden. Hearing it, the lips of Mark
Stirred with pale spasms, and from them, as would spring,
From covert a wild creature of the woods,
Out of the secret shadows of his mind
To light sprang Vivien's graceless name ; wherewith,
Such travail of his love-sick thoughts, with throes
Of husky utterance, waving arms, and cheeks
Red with the haste of passion, came to birth
The burden of his blind adulterous hopes.
“ Vivien ! ah, Vivien ! Fondling once of hers,
“ Amidst the butterflies of Arthur's court,
“ Was he, your king.—Vivien ! her eyes—stars, stars,
“ My liegemen, stars—whose random beams abase
“ The tempered glances of our dames—her eyes,
“ Like planet-stars would ever seek for me
“ As her sole sun : to tell by luminous look,
“ Excelling orders, pryncedoms, royalties,

"Which whirled around in rainbow-throngs, your king
"Within her love's respect." Mark's shrunken form
Grew with the fever of his mood : his laugh
Metallic, coarse, now owned a softened tune,
As Vivien's name had learned it music. "Ah,
"Vivien might not of me, nor I of her :
"But time will come. Fair ladies, you may smile.
"The evening lustre poured from Vivien's eyes
"Brightens above our dusk of absence : morn
"Near, and to be awakened by those eyes,
"Both wait in patience. Ay, my speech is plain.
"Tis told, that Vivien found a leman since,
"And wons with him in hoar Broceliande.
"Soon be that ended. Many loves your king
"May have, whilst lacking her." He paused to hear
A little, hidden, quavering, feminine laugh—
As comes the intermittent note of bird
From thicket ere its month of song arrives,
This mocking trill—and in Mark's pause, its voice,
"The queen ! the queen !" Mark answered challenge quick,
Vociferous, "Queen ! Which queen ? Of Camelot,
"Or this Tintagel ? or, one yet to be ?"
Foul mirth ran round the borders of his court,
Whereon, he adds, "'Tis for one's gain at times
"To clear the mind : it makes our fellows wise."
To other talk Mark turned, with sad conceit
His tongue had done good work, and not invoked
The fates in altered Belle Isonde. No word
She uttered ; murmured only in her heart,
"He is immured and sigheth unto death !"
The worst was now begun. With lengthening speech,
The tresses of La Belle Isonde, their bright
Heavily deepening into shade, their shades
Darkening, informed her bosom, now the lodge
Of torments. Mark had slain her loyalty,
And tolled the advent of his deadliest fear :

Removed the crown from off her heart : disrobed
 Her thoughts of hallowed passiveness : of queen,
 Dismantled every august privilege :—
 No more of queen for her to grace the throne,
 Nor on her soul for reverence—nevermore.
 Shorn of her comeliness, of smiles, she rose
 Speechless, but, as she passed the door, sounds fell
 Unconscious from her lips—"Asp of a King!"
 Shuddering, the court held silence, and its head
 Paled, cowering as he wot the sudden glaive
 Gleamed on his last of life. Thenceforth, his queen
A soul upon cross-currents of dark thoughts,
 Which loathed the present, shunned respected right.
 Mute-wandering ceaselessly, alone,
 A silent presence, she, within his halls—
 Cold, waning in her silence, till arose
 At midnight, from her ruffled dreams, fierce words
 With shrilling shrieks, and with the shrieks the flame
 Of phrensy brake upon her countenance :
 Her eyes, stabbed at a king within the air :
 Her hands, tore at its heart : her shrilling tongue
 Declared the blood, the fury, the content.
 Nor waiting dawn, king Mark made speed for France,
 Fearing her phrensy kindling—what, where, who?
 He knew not : or, her scorpion words had sting,
 Instant to strike, when, where, or how? he knew not.
A shapeless terror, proper chastisement
 Of dastard souls of cruelty, had cleansed
 Tintagel of that heart of fraud, its king.

Some six weeks thence, the angered peril past
 For Belle Isonde, her steps fresh-sought her groves,
 A queen of sorrow in Tintagel's towers,
 With sole and solemn rule. Within these weeks
 Mark had been judged : his first offence and chief
 Against the spiritual powers : next, wedded pledge

Broken with bruited boastfulness by Mark,
 On which, that pious light Dulricius
 Pronounced him excommunicate and signed
 The writing of divorcement, by his king
 Delayed not from Tintagel. Thus, Isonde,
 The sundering words of awe made free—gat gain
 Of freedom with no heart in it.

* * *

There was—
 Believe it, hearts of love, even as ye hear—
 A brightening of the star of Jupiter
 Upon the vigil of Epiphany,
 Sir Tristram's star,—since at his meal that eve
 His unseen warder spake him kindly. Who,
 But knows the blessing of the word in season?
 For Tristram, more was this than lavrock's song
 On darkling hours which sings the sun's approach.
 The gentle language of an uncouth voice
 Brought to his mind his last bright yesterday,
 Awakened hopes of daylight, with mirage
 Of glories of the tournament. And soon
 The angel of his Christian valiance cheered
 His heart late sorrowful as of the dead
 Within the sepulchre. He sank in dreams
 Where fields of noblest guerdon, realms of peace
 Prosperous in halls and lists gave starry fame
 To worth in arms: and, clearer than of dreams,
 Obtained a star more fair than stars of power,
 A visionary form, in smiles and grace
 A heavenly womanliness, o'erhung, it seemed,
 With golden mists as of resplendent hair,
 Clothed with like radiance.

Less than seven days thence,
 The dungeoned Tristram knew of nought beside,
 Than, loosed from chains and the loud cataract's cry,
 Borne from his hideous hold on kindly arms,
 Strange freedom claimed him. With that travel soothed,

He sank on sleep. Orion rose and fell,
Day came, and ruled with lordly light, and passed—
When wakening, lo, he found himself on sea,
The star of love lightening the evening hour,
The star of love shining above his head :
Isonde the Beautiful, his guardian now,
As she with woman's guile, in this quick time,
Had caused these things to be, and un-queened queen,
Guardian, and free from grim Tintagel's walls.

Bluff next morn's wind, but sailors of renown
Manned the good ship, so that her prow still kept
A forward voyage : and when eve brought calm,
Her large full moon revealed the isles, whereby,
On lucid waves life-love was born, as born
Love's queen, well-known, on azure orient seas
Saluted by the hours whose odorous dance
Thereon rings through the world to-day—mope, doubt,
Or moan, whoever, and how many list.
—No time for loitering now. Love's plumes are spread
To reach its fairest bowers by northern shores.
Swift through the waters, now direct to east
The vessel speeding through that night—next day—
And Tristram's old strong life began to flow
Responsive to the spring-tide's rising wave,
Each moment fledged with song, or song-like talk
Of past delights : and while the westering sun
Shot crimsoning radiance over all the deeps,
On that supremest of emotion's hours—
Tristram grew restless—saw, anew, his joy
Of Isonde with its rich original powers
Move in the shining mazes of her hair :
Light of all light the blossom, in her eye,
Whose glamour henceforth through all fate to hold,
Till sudden death-mists compassed both their lives.
Moulting his sorrows, on a stronger wing

His freshened spirit gloried as it rose.
Boldness, with deepening dusk—and when the moon
Silvered the myriad-wrinkled seas, and far
The cliffs of Dovre stood out clear, he drew
The master from his place: his spear-hands took
The helm, put ship about, and set her head
Against the pole-star. Then, wind-favouring night
Breathed from the south: before it eager sprang
The ship through star-lit hours: next day: next eve—
And when the Great Bear through heavens crystal-bright,
Eternal, wheeled above their eyes, the ship
Veered, as if witting home, to larboard up
Dull Humber's stream—with day-spring touched the land—
Logris was won.

Ere long, these news being brought
To Camelot, thence upon the court's desire,
Sealed by the ordinance of the Dragon King,
Launcelot with haste passed through the land to greet
These twain self-banished, yield them royalty
Of courtesy: which done, as lovers know,
He led them to his famous Joyous Gard.
Northwards, by long and pleasant paths he led
Isonde and Tristram. Then, approaching near
His fair possession's borders, he with sighs
Bade both farewell, distrustful that its view,
And their large joy in love's estate, might work
His passion to excess.

'Twas primrose time:
Exhilarating then the pomp of spring,
But close in loving intercourse the twain
Fare softly onwards, heeding none the tracts
Of flowery gold, which skirting either side
Lead from their path to fairy lawns wherein
Blue breaks of passionate forget-me-not
Peer bright as spring's own heavens: unconscious, too,
Of Joyous Gard itself, till by the shore

Within the sun it rises from the sea
Irradiant. Like some broad, voluminous shape
Of vapour, which upon an autumn eve
Towers in the western skies, with lustre clad
Of varying sunset hues up from its base
To high aerial battlements, no less
Of marvellous and of glorious to their sight
The keep of Joyous Gard. Then, unawares,—
As though invisible this lordliest keep
Till now—redoubled wonder in them. Hope,—
Sir Tristram won great hope in heart at this,
Remembering what the household legends held :
That Joyous Gard possessed a conscious life
For care of its indwellers : oft at noon
Fleeting, at midnight it would re-appear
Begirt and crowned with stars, but on the morn
Its station lay concealed. He cried in joy,
“ This truly is the home of love, of us
“ Expectant. Hid from eyes of enmity,
“ Hosts in their search discomfited may learn
“ Love’s bowers sequestered lie in keep of air.
“ Love’s choicest home, henceforth it shall be ours.’

CHAPTER IV.

Intrusted to the care of Joyous Gard, our song
 Must linger with the happy exiles here.
 Brave Joyous Gard ! or lands, or keep, or town
 Be named as Joyous Gard.

* * * * *

Look forth,—

Know Launcelot's province ! Seaward, roughly-edged,
 Range beyond range of black volcanic scars,
 Thence, westward, verdant undulating lands
 Stretch to the folding hills and half-way climb
 Their slopes : within the upper, keener air
 The moorland's growth, the crags, green combs, grey screes,
 The tarn, the eagle—here the loneliness
 Of hills, their terrors, loveliness and glooms.

Three furlongs from the strand, the little town
 Named Joyous Gard lies in a little dell,
 Through which the breathings of the sea come fresh
 Morning and evening. Little town, it looks
 Up to the Keep, whose station off-shore, east,
 Some three-score fathoms. Cunning its approach
 From narrow beach—a frith of pebbles, laid
 Between the sharp-cut rocks, whence went the way
 Suddenly shelving towards a sinuous path
 Hidden at ebb of tide,—access but one,
 Which found the portals cavernous and dark.
 Above the sea, the steeps high-climbing clothed
 With grass, moss, wilding flowers, unto the tall
 Columnar cliffs, tower-crowned.—Ah, of these towers !

Along the gaunt, brown pinnacles a growth
 Of sparry crags, or unto fancy's eye
 The blossoming of the brown, gaunt cliffs, along
 Whose crests it glittered, or beneath the sun,
 Or during star-lit hours.—Mysterious Keep !
 One foot within deep waters, one on land,
 Terrible in its beauty, of more fame
 Than its haught kindred, lone Tintagel, or
 Mount of Defence, when billows of the war
 Rolled in from the Atlantic.

This the work,

In happier years of Merlin, august voice
 Prophetic, from whose accents souls of hope
 Still trust the Beatific Time to see.
 This Gard, once named as Dolorous, now of Joy,
 Was edified by him in nights but seven :
 A silent, unseen labour of seven nights :
 Thence holding near affinity with night,
 Its majesties, its glories, and its powers,
 Its attributes of peace and mystery.
 The sea-mists first would gather o'er its towers,
 Last leave them. At such times, the landsmen cried,
 "Lo, Joyous Gard hath disappeared once more !"—
 "Lo, Joyous Gard floats on our waves again !"
 But the deceit of absent-mindedness
 Augmented wonders : as we frequent pass
 Some scene and see it not—those of the fields
 In eye-shot of the Keep, on many a day
 Would reap or delve, come, go, with earth-bent head,
 Then, some time, looking up,—“ Ah, me,” would cry.
 “This be a blessed hour ! The Gard of Joy,
 “Missed this long while, returns to us.” Should one,
 A chance wayfarer, walk that road and vow
 Before his travels it had been this while,
 They would embrace the man : with fairy gifts
 Deem him endowed, and hospitality

Enforce with words of worship—simple race,
As further we to learn.

Miles twain o'er sea,
Out towards the orient, running south and north,
A long, low-crested line of reefs stayed off
The wind-wrought surges—with nor-easter days,
Shattered thereon in cloudlike splendours,—thus,
A slumbrous, inner, ocean-lake retained,
Peculiar watery province of the Gard,—
Beset with isles, which, here and there a home,
Made bright scenes brighter, each with crescentholt
Of gracious lady-birch, in autumn time
Midst sunlight very bowers of trembling gold.
Upon the furthest northern holm, a fane,
Conspicuous shrine of spiritual power,
Eye, soul of Joyous Gard's humanities,
Caught with one glittering point, whilst valleys slept
And yet the inland heights were darkness, caught
Morn's earliest light shot o'er the eastern seas,
As eager for new promise from that east,
Well-spring of sacred light.

O, Joyous Keep !

O, Royal Gard ! O, happy those its charge !
Bright spirits are their ministers : for them,
Quietly ocean's waters fall and flow,
Retire and flow again. If on the sea,
Within the storm if any sorrow rang,
It reaches not these towers : the tempest's cry
Sounds as a murmuring rill, or when the winds
Mourn in the beechen groves : all beauteous things
Of sea-birth flourish in the tranquil wave,
Or moving through the crystal deeps, or far
Beneath in clusters grow, a wealth of flowers
As earth's flowers do in air.

Once hither come,
La Belle Isonde and Tristram, bowers apart

Are duly given them : his outlooking west
Abroad upon the lands and warder hills :
Hers eastward, with the sea lake and its isles,
A pleasaunce all her own. O, Joyous Gard,
What fervent, dainty times, alive with cheer
Of gentle change, which is the salt of life,
For these our exiled lovers lingering here.
Days grow to weeks : the weeks mature to months—
Which find them still true acolytes of love,
Enquiring of its secrets, which would own
Elysian birth-right of felicities
Robed in dawn-splendours. Then, their wanderings—
Whither ? Ah, could we follow them, to learn
The life of those meek dwellers in their land,
And of its leafy privacies, and what
Of grandeur and of awe its mountains hold.
These quick delights, with island journeys, kept
Love-life in pulse and flame of sense and soul
True as the alternation of the tides.
Their talk, heart-eloquence upon the lips,
Its temper fashioned by each scene, most gay
Towards eventime, with fancies rainbow-winged
In flight at objects far or near, as framed
For their peculiar pleasures. So the months
Slid by delectably.—Then martial rouse
Brake from a brawling trumpet off the shore,
Sounded by squire of Arthur, from whose tongue,
Rough as a war-cry, through these northern lands
Under the ordinance of the Dragon King
A tournament was cried at Lonazep :
And with him, warlike as his precept, rode
Swart Palomide.

It was a raw, cross day,
As now and then will creep from Jutland's dunes,
Possess the broad north sea, invade the isles.
Mist, like a vast unrisen cloud clung close

And hid the wave : the forest-herds, the fields,
Homesteads and mountain falls, as of the mist
Drank silence, save when wet winds drave across
Sharp as the sword of frost, with groans beneath
As of the trouble of a soul. Such sounds,
Such stillness here, when Odin's knight was led
Hither, as he was ever, by Isonde,
And took his lodgment in the town—soul-sick
And wearying of his weary, forlorn quest,
More grieved to learn within such doleful lands
Lived Belle Isonde.

“ She must draw unto death ; ”
He thought. “ Within this home of trampling clouds
“ It cannot otherwise. An if she die,
“ Death, and the quickest, were most sweet for me.”
At evening, sea-blown midnight took the town,
Sealed hope in darkness, and for his resolve
A demon-phantom travelled on the mist,—
To his perdition, held his soul in thrall.
“ An she must die, I shall die first, and now.”
Yet held he back his hand : maybe, the morn
Less palled with cloud, he might behold the keep
Wherein Isonde : the view, it might endear
The dagger-thrust. But with the morning came
Winds from the hills, and clove the Jutland gloom,
Which opening, rolling, closed again, but cleft,
Ceaselessly hither, thither, rolled, till day
Pierced through the mist-clouds' heavenward heights of gold :
Wind, cloud and light, not dallying as at eve
Desiring best to minister to joy ;
But strong, and bright, and swift each strove—whilst men
Drew anxious breath as well they wot the fray
Of fierce ethereal hosts on their behoof
For night or liberty of sunshine,—last,
Lightness and brightness. Paynim Palomide,
Beholding with astonied countenance

Mists moving, now revealing, now concealing,
 The knight divined a new world was being born.
 When last the life, the Joyous edifice,
 Flashed various colours o'er the ghostly cliffs,
 And at their feet the clinging earth showed rich,
 As void it never was that season's month
 Of wilding blooms, all floating on a sea,
 Which held their shadows as a thought of bliss
 Held in a lover's bosom, Palomide,
 This mighty and imperial Joyous Gard,
 Of glorious things of earth most glorious this,
 Unto his knightly soul : and to his heart,
 To hold his heart's-hope in her loveliness
 The fittest pile.

When Tristram gat report
 How Upsal's knight was near, in rueful mood
 Still questing for Isonde, he sped his squire
 With welcome.—Nay. That essay much too bold.
 To enter in the lodgment of his foe
 None may, endued with warrior's wariness.
 Whereon, the knight of Joyous Gard himself
 Brings his own welcome. Still, the paynim's voice
 Wavering, eludes. " Another time, perchance,
 " An this may be,—not now." To which demur,
 Replying without sentence, Tristram's eyes
 Quickened with light of blameless Honour, threw
 Upon his countenance the strength and shine
 Of the heart's morning, whilst he gently caught
 The wanderer's left mid-finger, softly led
 Forthright to Joyous Gard. Even thus was he,
 Whom iron scarce might hold, even by a touch,
 Lightest of any, taken that one way
 He needs must go by reason of his love
 For Belle Isonde.

O, marvellous Joyous Gard,
 For Palomide ! The chambers of the keep ;

Aërial towers ; their strength invincible ;
The sea-domain, its fair innumerable isles,
With frequent waving woodlands clothed, more fair
Than those which beautify thy native streams—
Were all, as Odin for thy quest bestowed
The brightest residence of Himmelberg,
That paradise above the crossing swords,
Of spirits doughtiest in Valkyrian deeds.
O, Joyous Gard ! miraculous realm of joy
For Palomide ! Or, in the morning hunt
Ranging the greenwoods : thorough sylvan del
Musical as a rebeck from the rills
Glinting amongst their shingles—over glades,
Green velvet breadths whereon the rings were seen
Of fairy revels : joyous travail now
For steed, and hound, and man to press right on,
Right up the boulder-sprinkled slopes, and last,
The game with slackened pace, hard breathed, finds last
The roaring, rocky, eagle-haunted gorge
Where closed abrupt the chase,—a gainless toil,
For mirthful wonder,—nature's mind well shown
To give her creatures heritage of peace
And stern security from outward harm.
—Or, on the homeward way, when he would find,
Or seek, drawn by the prompting of Isonde,
Beautiful spirit of that rare demesne,
Felicities in every opening view ;
Grace, hiding in the green haunts of the fern ;
Cool sweetness breathed from mossy water-slips ;
Beneath the delicate shadows of the woods,
Coverts, wherein the elves, preparing soon
For dancing frolics pleasing to their queen
Cynthia, and court of countless laughing lights :
Smooth, shining pools, the water-lilies' home,
Seen with her own eyes some few months ago,
Large, silver shallows, which returned once more

Spring would sail in them.—Or, Sir Tristram's voice
Deep-toned and clear, bade pause their steeds, to note
The clarion of a torrent from the cliff,
Answering its brethren lost in distant caves ;
Or, mighty stag-horned oak which stood supreme
With lordship of seven leagues of pastoral vale ;
Or, now it was an eagle in high air
Majestical, peremptory king, and calm
Throned in empyreal sapphire, ruling thence,
Proud power predominant, the peaceful bounds
Of these fair liberties of Joyous Gard.
In every title of the law of peace.

To roam at eve, fulfilled some new delights.—
Gentles, the high noon of the season this,
The guardian hills assume their regal pomp,—
Their shoulders, length and depths down to the fields,
Robed with imperial purple. Season this,
To feel the balmiest blisses of the heights.
None lost by them. When sunk the autumn day,
Leaving an after-glow on wave and shore,
A brightness brightening where day-shadows fell,
Found was our company on heather slopes
Entranced, mute-gazing at the seaward view.
The landskip, sparkling emerald, lay beneath,
Netted with silver brooklets from the hills,
Sprinkled with lodge and hamlet, each the sign
Of home and hospitality ; green bowers
Unchanged since spring : far-scattered sea-lake isles :
The castle's crowning, quivering, diamond gleam
Above the calm, clear, interfluent wave
Wherein, as beautiful, the upper-world
Lay shadowed : and, yet visible, afar,
As streamers on the quiet, black-frost night,
Restlessly wreathing foam-fringe, opal hues
Embosomed in white lustrous clouds :—all this,

Brought thoughts, and deep emotions, more than speech
 Could utter ; left a happiness behind
 Deeper than any gift of loud delight.

Such roving ended, oft their steps attained
 By rocky ways one large, round mountain-mere
 Named Zeemerwater. Well, you wot, a name
 Of blended tongues ; as those who named it felt—
 “ This water is so excellently fair,
 “ Translucent, still—its virtues shall be known,
 “ Hereafter, threefold-named whenever man
 “ Shall mention it.” And virtuous is that truth.
 O, water ! water ! water ! threefold peace,
 And loveliness, and crystal light, still thine.
 Yea, when the dread nor-easter sounds—sole voice
 Whose anger reached the homes of Joyous Gard
 Or troubled dwellers in its halcyon years,
 Never this mountain lake bereft of peace—
 A fluctuating silver smile—nor more—
 Deranged its passionless tranquillity.

Hereby, those friends at eventime would rest.
 Tristram lain at the feet of Belle Isonde,
 Fondling his lyre by that lone mystic mere,
 Their former joys re-blossomed : Palomide
 Naught grieved, yea glad, for his own heart allowed
 The magic of the music, since for him
 Radiant-winged memories arose—Isonde,
 Still smiling on him through the lattice-green
 Within her Irish home. To hear that strain,
 Flowers by the marge cast off the sleepy dew,
 Spread wide their petals as they felt fresh day,
 Yielded their morning incense, stirred their heads
 As amorous of the kisses of the wind :
 Then, softly-sailing murmurs told the bees
 Were on their noontide honied quest. —But, list !

Floating athwart the surface of the wave
 Aërial symphonies—now heard—now gone,
 When Tristram pauses. On his new-touched string—
 A coil of low, sweet harmonies reply
 As from flower-hidden fountains flowing. Now,
 Unwinding o'er the waters, hither steal
 Mixed melodies—more rigorous when the strain
 Augmenting : rising, falling—climbing high
 As lark may sing in air,—along the shore
 Now ranging audibly—and two-fold noise
 Swept through the music—in the woven tones
 Were tears and laughter.

Whence these wondrous sounds?

Whence?—Echoes from some region o'er the hills,
 Sore-smitten in one province,—revelry
 Within its civic borders—all here heard?
 Or, some invisible city in the air
 Festival in its groves, its lanes plague-struck—
 Its cries and joy-calls heard alike? Or, whence?
 Asked Isonde and their guest. Whereon, his heart
 Remembered, and the harper's fingers mute
 Fell on his knees, as he with sigh relates,—
 "Beneath this mere, close-hedged by these its hills,
 "A city lived, a place of gladsome times,
 "Envied of demon-powers which sway the clouds.
 "These, on mid-summer's merriment, the day
 "Wherefrom the grace of sunshine ne'er removed,
 "So dear to the ascended Lord of Light—
 "The clouds brought hosts west, north, and south, and east.
 "Though succouring winds drave from the mountain heights,
 "Sharp-stricken by the arrows of the rain, they fell—
 "Hosts of the clouds prevailed, and forty days
 "Numbered of evil, every day as night,
 "Darkness, and roar of rain, and tumbling cliffs
 "Closing the high-roads from the dales.—Thenceforth,
 "No more the voice of lover or of bride :

"Of the new father : or of children's glee ;
"Of Christian praise ; of chimes for even-song,
"Or matins.—Only from this town o'er which
"The waters keep an endless silver night,
"Will issue, answering to my harp's sad soul
"Commingling notes of ancient joys and woes,
"Or, of themselves upon midsummer's day.
"This heard I first within our keep : since then,
"Sought by me frequent, to my harping hand
"Ever these waters, or the sky above
"Have answered : and, as I have known, ye hear,
"Who now have token of the elements
"And ask the tale." And oft rehearsed that tale.
Day's-travels done : the mere attained : the harp
Sorcerous, drew spring around,—each listener's heart—
As in the rose-lipped shell we hear its own
Melodious memories—each listening heart
Acquiring from the mingled sounds its own
Harvest of love and pleasure from past years.
Then would the old tradition speak once more.
Yet why his invocation?—Still the truth
For lover as for saint, that happiness
Most sweet within the shadow of sorrow and pain.
Hovering above the wave these threnodies,
Entangled in bright festal songs, woke ruth,
Woke piteous ruth, sharpening the sense of joy—
As echoes sad from lands afar, whereon
Thought might but briefly brood. For here be none
Of trouble, or of dread, or hopes which feed
On life,—alone a passive happiness,—
Prime of the best bygone, with dews and light
Best future e'er may give, its nourishment.
The stars arisen, from Tristram's hand would fall
Pathetic silence : symphonies, and moans
Subsiding, as the sound of evening bells
Borne on the wind away—nor rose again—

But gently sank and died; and last, were heard
Voices as if in prayer, upon the hills,
Which sent the friends with pensive pilgrim-pace
To seek their castled bowers of sleep. * * *

* * * Seven times,
Had ocean duly hymned his orisons
Throughout the sacred, greater Morning Hours,
With trumpet-voice,—unheard within the keep,
So strong the silken toils of slumber held,
Strangers to any care, who dwelt therein—
But, now, its walls, in answer to the sun
An orient blaze,—now, from the reefs out-rolled
Midst dazzling vapours of their spray, the voice
Majestical, was heard, to wake the choirs,
Rivulets, torrents, birds and quivering leaves,
The early ritual in the holy fane,
All notes of morning praise—now, heard the voice
By busied folk in Joyous Gard, alert
For progress unto Lonazep ere noon.

That pleasure-travel over, they arrived,
La Belle Isonde, Sir Tristram, Palomide,
Damsels and squires, late but not last, to find
Logris from all her quarters sent her knights,
With chiefest of the Table Round,—and, there,
The Dragon King himself. But on the view
Of Isonde every fault forgiven, as told
The king's heart in sonorous greeting, heard
By every knight with new flame in the blood,
By dames in mute dismay. The fairest forms
Upon her presence were despoiled of grace,
And grace of loveliness,—yet each in pride,
Or ruth, confessed, from knowledge or report
The realm of sun-bright names could name but one
Who should excel, or rival—Guinevere,—
Halting mid-way upon her journey hither,

Cold, petulant, in Cardoyle's perfumed bowers.

The morning of the gentle tournament
Informed what zeal in this twofold emprise
Of arms and beauty, now to be adjudged.
Well seen, our Logris never has before
Completed such a radiant company.
On regal seat, o'er-canopied, the King—
Power-president of the Table Round. In form
Still stately,—yet, no wavering of that hand,
Noblest in Britain's kingly lines, which formed
His age for nations to revere : though hope
O'erclouded in his eye, his saintly soul,
Kept its auroral powers of light : even as,
Before the face of battle, now his face
Shone beautiful at promise of the jousts.
Close by the throne, high o'er the canopy,
Heavily hung in drowsy crimson folds
The Dragon Standard, yet to throw its flames
On this field's valour. Eager was the morn
With country swarms, afoot or roughly horsed,
From near and far : which loved to see their king,
To feel the battle-throes—when fought the knights,
An' they without the barriers : curious these—
But those for tourney-raptures longing, shewed
Proud in deport, with glittering arms, and plumes
Gay-coloured, tossing on the rider's course,
And shields of rich recognisance—their squires
Bedight as fanciful as maids. And, here,
Within the balcon, either side the King,
Of fair and dark, of grace and graciousness
Such affluence as had left in silent glooms
Half the land's lady-bowers, whose martial halls
Have maintenance of princes, for these days
Of their inheritance of loveliness
Defrauded.

Chiefly in attire, this morn,
The dames' contention. Vivien held her worth
Must overmatch the beauty of Isonde.
So seen, and seen but to enhance the day,
She moved a fragrance breathed from orient bowers
Thrown wide beyond her footsteps : gay-beseen,
Apparelled as the meads, white, green, and gold,
King cups and daisies, gleaming in the grass,
When June's rose-breath o'ertakes the bloom of May,—
Symbolled in golden favours of her knights,
Bright silks and pearls,—the subtle witch of taste,
In visage and address demeaned herself
Confident, gladsome, in her pride, as she
Authentic daughter of the diamond keep.
As she, so everywhere the balcon's freight,
Odours diffused, and with the shine of robes
Unparagoned in royal rooms, bewitched
Wide o'er the barriers. Women's best gift to men,
Joy—from their delicate favours self-bestowed
Insensibly in use,—but open guile
Scarce less delectable,—although their speech
Failed in its music, distance-lost, their eyes
Might shower no splendours, to the common folk
Outside the lists, the perfumed airs, and hues
Of restless vestures told that women's gift
Still prospered. Faces fair, with dimpling smiles,
Wantoned in tissues of all varied sheen :
Those auburn, robed in sombre-shaded silks
Withdrawn from Mecca : others dark, arrayed
In crimson Sendal : but no place of note
Held back its tribute,—gleaming garments sent
From the enchanted looms of Provençal :
Its lace of gold from Brittanie, as bright
As fringe of evening clouds : from pastoral Raines,
By maiden hands these lissome vestures woven,
Whose web had caught the love-light from their eyes,

Vibrating with each motion : but, or dark,
Rose-red, or brown, or what apparel chosen,
La Belle Isonde excels, though she appear
In simple radiance of her native charms,
Enrobed in lily-satin : as a star
Shone beauty's sceptred hand : and when at length
Unwimpling—noon brake full upon the morn,
And murmurs from all tongues announce the spell
Wrought by the living lustre of her hair
And glory of her countenance.

But now,
The voice of Lonazep affirms the hour
Due for the tourney. Beauty now requires
Worship of arms. Knightly confessions made
Of ladye-love, the herald's trumpet rang
Dressing each lance to rest ; and this for death
Or honour. Palomide for death.

First seen,
First feat was his. Well-skilled, with slanting spear
He entered helm and brain. It was the prince
Blown oversea from Armorica fell
First sacrifice, whereby, the sable knight
As earnest of his passion, potency,
And deft exploit, this chiefest feat in arms
Writ in the laws of chivalry, performed.
All done in his obeisance to his queen ;
A service, in his trust—marked but by one,
Since veiled with samite his recognisance,
So none might read his heart. Thenceforth, that day
No might or craft withstood him. Or the crown,
Its lords, the balcon's beauty, knights arraigned
For judgment, were as general lookers-on,
Marvelling alike, as every thrust and stroke
Won worship for the paynim. His the brand
Tempered within the secret icy springs
Of Nifleheim, inscribed with magic runes,

Fulfilled within this tourney : but fulfilling,
Hereafter, higher duty, subaltern
To Tristram's chivalry of faith. His lance,
Won on a summer's noon beside the Ure,
From an o'er-boastful baron of the court,
So well, so often, had he proven its strength,
That, by his gods, he sware, the strong tree's life
Lived in that spear, and wroth thus foully rent,
Inexorable sought the kind's heart-blood
Which shore it from its home. That sword and spear,
The lightning, and the thunder, and the death
Of battle rendered to the stricken lists.
Strength grew with his puissant labour. Knights,
All men of proof, the passion of his spear
O'erwhelmed or e'er their steeds gat time to fetch
Their course upon a second joust : or quelled,
Stout though their arms and dazzling, by the swift
Edge of that two-edged sword. Thus, when was heard
The chime of vespers from a chapel near
Sounding to prayers, closing that royal play,
The lists in every steel-scourged quarter shewed
Ruin of harness, iron, silver, gold,
Blood-tarnished havoc, without soul to give
Life to the purposes of morn. Ne'er since
Those jousts in circuit of the northern king,
When Norroy challenged Camelot, and red
Ran Trent, ne'er in the loud seven years between,
Carnage like this—but names I leave untold
Not in despite, but pity, as I leave
Those brightest, best of my own years, laid now
In nameless sleep.

Yet this puissant worth,
Foreseen by jocund Dinadin, who sang
His news as combatants rode forth, or fought,
Or fell. He noted Palomide at morn
Mounting, make search for Belle Isonde, who found,

As her laugh rang, he took it to his heart
A tuneful answer, and his visage showed
Effulgence, as the torse were on his brows—
The stranger's trophy. Dinadin wot well
Whence fared with fiery courage Palomide
From knowledge of the morn, and these his news—
In winding, rhyming riddle ever sang
With burden "'Tis his day, Love : 'tis his day !"
The pageant ended, with a railing voice
Disguised in dulcet numbers, o'er the lists
Sir Dinadin proclaimed, as to defect
Of Odin's Knight. "The worship he hath won,
"Faith, is begotten of the Queen Isonde !
"Isonde in Joyous Gard, no prize had been
"Thine, pagan. Queen Isonde, makes this thy day."
The mirth hereon, not more than on the beach,
Weak-murmuring, sliding back within its wave
The latest ripple of the flowing tide,
Nor more the sound of mirth,—since Palomide
Now knight-of-hearts through valour : but they all
Held breath, as he with reverence towards the king
Unhelmed, performed his homage to Isonde.
"I own the day not mine, great warrior-king.
"My service lies where named : through it, I vaunt—
"Heard of the mightiest of thy Table Round—
"I never did so much : nor ever shall
"In all life's battle-days : and no knight here
"May reach beyond my valiance—and its queen
"She hath been named." Sir Launcelot, straight replied,
"Ye have done marvellously well these jousts :
"How Love has led ye through, I understand :
"Well have I known, Love is a goddess great :
"For were my lady here, as she is not,
"My parlance had not been amongst these dames
"But where the spear and sword debate, whereon,
"Pray, wit ye well, such worship Palomide

"Should not have borne from us." Even so, that day
The paynim bore from all, from all received,
His due degree.

This weight of honour earned
To his despite in fealty to Isonde
Pressed hard on Tristram's soul. Day gone, his steps
Forsook his bright pavilion, sought the dark
For comfort of its cold and silence. Naught,
Answered his hot desires : within the air
The war-horse neighed, he heard the tourney-spears
Ring in attaint, with moans from one defoiled.
Asking the stars for peace, he saw in them
Immortal memories of sorrow—none
Within the twinkling hosts but heart of fire
Restless, even as his own in agonies
Born of another's glory.

When morn shone
For scenes of honour's throes and beauteous birth
Of valiance,—discomposed, of clouded face,
Thoughts fever-mad, he turned from Lonazep
But that Sir Dinadin crossed him. Ever free,
From peevish cares, and heart-whole, Dinadin ;
This was the very spirit for the morn
So dark in Tristram. With his dancing eyes,
Loud, fluting voice, as one who scorns a foe
New-fallen, in utter praise he spake and sang
Of Palomide :—Unconquerable in selle ;
Matchless in knighthood : proven Valkyrian spear :
Pure, golden branch of chivalry : O, sword,
Surpassing rare Excalibur : swart prince,
Outbraving Arthur's Ring, from heathenesse :
For bounty, sufferance, largeness, courtesy,
Pre-eminent star ! " My Tristram ! Lion-knight !
" Where be his hiding ?—Ah, mine eyes have found.
" Shy, sighing truant."—Tristram moaned. " Fool-knight,
" Silence, fool-knight ! A war-worn man you see.

"But anguish of the soul since yester-eve,
"More than the doughtiest arms, this arm subdues.
"I am un-knighted ; now, must seek my own.
"Far Lyonesse ! the martial pilgrim's shoon
"Through ways of danger, pain, and penitence
"Shall seek thee now. The conscience of my love
"Attainted in this land, my pride abates
"Flight and desire. But when I shall be known
"By the loud breakers at my royal place,
"Their boy-loved tones of battle-cheer, perchance,
"Will re-awaken knighthood in me. Go."
To which Sir Dinadin his whistle blew,
Shrill as when falconer shall provoke his bird
To higher flight, and for Sir Tristram's ear
This sally to his deepening hurt. "Dear lord,
"Be such thine orison ? A dame of cheer,
"Known well to all, hath vowed the soaring lark
"Singing, bestows her music of delight,
"On which her heart will sing—and this, forsooth,
"Because her lord was song. A dame, you deem,
"Of foolish cheer. Then, pray her better wit !
"Ah, sleep is still within thine eyes ; the worse,
"Wanting sleep in fair season. O, thou art,—
"Late lion-spear, and lion-sword,—become
"A sullen weed beside a stagnant pool :
"A peacock parting with its plumes to magpies :
"The royal beast that fled with fear to hear
"Tromp of his doom in the loud ass's bray ?"
Black wrath in Tristram had that instant slain
The scorner, but his hand unsatisfied
Felt at the baldrick where his blade should hang.
O'erborne by wrath, devoid of arms, he raised
His fist of mail, when Dinadin great in voice,
"There—there, the hopeful anger ! None of rest,
"My new-awakened lord, till passion's powers
"Have slaked thy thirst for honour and renown,

“And made this day red-bright.”

But now there calls
 The brazen beume ; three strenuous blasts, whereon,
 The Dragon King, princes, dukes, knights, and squires
 Have dressed themselves unto the tourney-field,
 Whose golden galleries either side the throne,
 Ennobled with all beauty of the lands
 Seen yester-morn, shed airs of Persian groves
 Athwart the lists, as drew from western woods
 Soft breezes for their curious messengers.—
 Blow, blow ye fragrant breezes ! from your bowers
 Bring hither healing calm for fevered hearts,
 Else storm of death, forboded by these clouds
 On Tristram's brow, shall make, O, Lonazep,
 Thy name a terror from this day.—And she,
 A sweet child of the dawn, in loveliness
 Appears to worshipful eyes again, her powers
 Unworn, wherever seen her countenance,
 Or heard that harp-toned voice. And Vivien strove—
 Enchantments of her grace and elegance
 Consummate in their virtues wrought, nor failed.
 Hers, liberal light of smiles—hers, fashioned quaint
 Carnation rainnet, here and there a star,
 Emblem of passion and desire attained
 Suddenly, unexpected—as Ninon
 Avers most good in loves like hers—nor failed.
 For Mordred's voice affirmed—that wary bird,
 Fast kept in Vivien's net—when he beheld
 The prodigal glory of untempered knights,
 Surcoat and harness, helm and shield a-blaze
 With favours, make a garden of the field,—
 “This day is Vivien's !”

Other powers, Isonde's :
 Whose grace for Tristram, fell no more aslant
 On other knight : but in meridian shone
 Full on her very Tristram. Heart of Love !

O, vehement Honour ! Kindled all their fires,
Tristram his pageant played so wondrously,
The battle-proven Arthur, and his peers,
Barons—whose long life-sport had been the wars :
Those dames, familiar with the nimblest feats
Achieved for empery of their favours ; folk,
Who always love the roughest shock, and blow
The ruddiest and most fell, joined common voice
Lauding the Knight of Lyonesse. His course—
Each, every blow, and turn, and thrust—his strength,
His long-breathed valour—like were marvelled at.
Through that wide-wasting holiday of blood
He drave as though the valiance of a realm
Intrusted to his shock : smote, as the jousts
Were called for him alone : throughout that day
His one hand held the torment of deep wounds,
Sweet mercy of quick death the other held,
His heart, forgiveness on the pleading voice—
Such grace has ever heart of love ! That day,
Sore-travailed, he nor changed nor brand, nor lance,
Nor martial weeds : first to begin was he,
He last to end : unresting he, like death
The reaper, through the lists went first and last.
A piteous field in its high revelry !
Or seen the mighty in their agonies,
Or those, the flowers of morn—now spread, wan-hued,
To beautify these direful jousts. The spear,
Approved of Love and Honour, through him smote
Recognisant of both ; their sword, nor swerved,
But struck and striking answered in each blow
As to the grave confessing : midst all praise
None might appraise his Honour and his Love,
None the puissance of that arm elect,
Nay, nor its gentle knightliness : its deeds,
Attended by acclaim of truthful words,
Doubled the deeds Sir Palomide had done.

Which great acclaim, woke frenzy in that knight ;
Perplexity, and sorrow of soul—despair
So wild and sightless, as in dreams he hove
Apart the tourney : but three times drawn back
By fiend begotten of disordered thoughts,
Three times had slain Sir Tristram treasonously.
Three times o'ermatched his jealousy of hate,
By jealousy of love in Launcelot,—once,
Spared by the pity in Sir Tristram's spear ;
Twice, in its pitying sorrow ; thrice, forgiven
In sorrowing pity by his spear and sword,
And vailed from common ken the knight's reproach
By Tristram in his honour's courtesy,
Which sought some utterance in its knightly speech,
Resting upon his last essay. “ This time,
“ Launcelot, in thee puts forth its brightest flower.
“ Above the lists, our heavens are pure and fair :
“ So shines thy knightliness of heart on me.
“ Well is it, when we love. Thé dust of life
“ Shines golden,—accident, or strife, or pain
“ Be golden blessings—or we lose or thrive,
“ If in the light of love.—But happier far,
“ Attended by the vigilance of one
“ Whose love is as this knightly love of thine.
“ 'Tis of the angel-hosts.”—But there was snapt
His rising speech, as oft his harp when load
With note too fine for human ears—for spake,
Abrupt, with hurried tremble in his voice,
The knight of knights, the knight of Guinevere,
First name and disrepute of knightlihood,
The knight, whose heart grown grey before his beard,
All, all through Love—with hurried, trembling voice,
Launcelot, distraught, remorseful as he heard,
Yet dazzled by the glory as he heard
Words all too kind, and glory in his soul
Kindling thereon, fulfilled in haste of speech,

"None may contest thy day. This day is thine,
"By the divinity of love, whose faith
"We serve. Another day the jousts be mine,
"Mine, then, thy present grace—which worthiest, they,
"The angel-hosts, may judge. Nearest our king,
"I see thy inspiration. Wanting one,
"Now hid in Cardoyle's bower,—she claims my heart
"In worship. By St. Michael, unto me
"The rarest covenant of beauty made
"Between earth's dust and immortality,
"Is she, thy fair Isonde : well-worth this field
"O'erwrought with jeopardy. With this reserve—
"Wanting of one—none in our royal halls
"Compare with thy Isonde.—But whose large form
"Sweeps like an eagle on the jousts?" This while,
As clouds in breaking up, go down the wind
On different ways, the folk of all estates
Were so departing, but in haste returned
When rode a knight from south, as one kept late
And yet must keep his pledge.

Entered the lists,
Nimble he drew his rein before the king ;
Displayed the blazon of his shield—a sword
Within a heart. The black indented shield,
The sword, the bleeding heart, spake terrible
The will of him their bearer. With slow hand,
The knight availed and showed his face, a face
Full-earnest, but a peach-bloom face : his height
And thews of giant brood : but when he spake,
Greeting the throne of Arthur, he was known,
Scarce more than eunuch-voiced. His name, it fell
From Belle Isonde's white, tremulous lips,—the Knight
Of Peril,—and it was as winds had caught
Her words, so swiftly, widely noised his name.
"Good news ; good news ; great news ; to end the day.
"Fair Knight of Peril, he will give us news

"Of stiffer service than have known these jousts :
"An' brave Sir Tristram, he must answer them."
But Isonde's fear now gone, as to herself,
Her royal kinsfolk heard her murmur thus :—
"Truly, thou art a god of breathing gold
"To those within Tintagel : but not that
"Shall save thy body from the iron's law
"Striving with flesh, and ruling these our days."

Amazement troubled either gate, when seen
The Knight of Peril his obeisance make
Before the Beautiful, then turn in scorn
Whilst to the herald's challenge he confessed,
"Vivien !" For three-score heart-beats in the lists
Deep silence of surprise, when once again
Spoke Peril's Knight, "Here, an' so help me God,
"St. Martin, and my ladye ! I acquit
"My pledge given Cornwall's king,—from France returned,
"To Cornwall's joy returned—before seven days
"Brought hence shall traitor-Tristram's heart appease,
"As naught else may, his sleepless wrath. On Love,
"I call—known queenly as I named, as known
"Alike by kings, knights, squires ; an' call on them,
"Now, to approve my pledge." For Vivien's ear,
Mordred aloud,—"Christ's mercy, how the folk
"Be tamed ! Where, be their eager, hungry shouts
"For Tristram ? Still the morning's counsel holds
"Best for these after-hours : an' holds my faith,
"This yet be Vivien's day—sweet Vivien's day !"

Fire sprang from Tristram's eyes as he bade speed
Divide the sunshine of the falling noon
Between them. Nor, the smiles of Belle Isonde,
Nor Arthur's waving hand of grace, assuaged
The risen tide of anger, as with tones
Learnt from the torrents of the hills, our Knight

Of Lyonesse,—“I hear thee call on Love.
“Love answers from the dust. Dire Anteros,
“Hath claimed thee! Now, to Lonazep hath brought
“Tintagel’s ribald shame for doom—with laud
“Of honour. Of thy kindred, sadly known,
“None hold with men of worship : thou, too, known
“As light-o’-love, a curse to honest dames :—
“Of thine and thee, that brand—but, now, their brand,
“Ever-remembered from this hour to be,
“Drawn by this spear. Weakling, you deem, in me
“A knight-forewearied by this battailous day,
“Of which, due-born of thunder, shall its fame
“Run through the confines of these realms. My arm
“Upstayed by honour still—but, say thee sooth,
“Need none, for yonder smirking squire, this eve
“Unlace thy harness.” Then, they made their course :
So well demeaned—they clashed—and in mid-lists
Both spears were burst—yet in his selle each knight
Unmoved—composed as they had toyed with straws.
Whereon in wrath, as though his word were broke,
His lance so breaking, Tristram leaped to ground ;
“I have no second spear,” he hoarsely cried,
In drawing of his sword, “Behold this blade !
“Though thine the armour of Bordeaux thrice-proven,
“Such cunning shall its lightning-edge now wreak,
“As folk shall wot the vagaries of thy life
“Rehearsed in death—their marvel, and my praise—
“Direct dishonour unto thee.” He smote
Tintagel’s champion, sharp, inscrutable blows—
The poignant sword-light was beheld, nor more,
Besides arms falling into hasty ruins.
Then, Tristram’s supple wrist and subtle play
Carved tediously the flesh of Peril’s Knight,
Morsel by morsel, as to the seventh death
For sacrifice : last, with three diverse blows
He hewed his body that his heart leaped out,

And horror fell on all estates to know
 Fulfilment of such wrath, on which the king
 Hand-screened his eyes, and with his right held forth
 The peace-commanding sceptre. So that day,
 Crowned by Sir Tristram with red-hilted sword,
 Its proud degree his own.

What time morn's light,
 A spring of yellow broom before the rose
 Flames fuller season, and contrary sprites,
 Eager for day, or wearying of the dark,
 These brightest and those saddest, early risen,
 Cry, "Lo, the day appears!" the Dragon King
 Walked midst the knights' pavilions, where he heard
 Sir Tristram's harp, awakened by the dawn.
 Said he, whilst passing—"That is as the voice
 Of some rare lady sounding in mine ears."
 Whereon, the harper, hearing this, bespake
 His knightly fellow. "Arthur hearkened. Thou,
 "So hearkening, if of love were thine to hear,
 "So hearkening, I had said, fair knight, to thee,
 "My Lady Isonde's voice spake from the strings
 "When at her matins within Joyous Gard,
 "The peace of happy sleep still held by prayer
 "Asleep within her heart. But thou, fair knight,
 "Hast not love's hearing." Unto which, the man,
 "An' I may speak, more truly may I speak
 "Than harped voice. This day, thy Belle Isonde
 "Shall little gain of peace, and gaining not,
 "Make this a dolorous day for thee. And this,
 "Through shallow peace of Joyous Gard."

These jousts,
 Last, first in fame, at Lonazep, were named
 The Jewel Tournament; when dames desired,
 And damsels deemed the time was opportune,
 To shew their treasures—heirlooms, fulgent spoils
 Of heathen thrones, offerings through blood and pain,

From foreign realms, by knighthood hither borne—
Compacted wealth in gems : and, furthermore,
Consecrate to the Table Round, this day.
Of this, I name but of the sacred twelve,
Who then appeared. The aged Geraint, whose lance
Reposed against the throne, since oft that throne
In bygone times of dread attained repose,
Alone from Geraint's spear ; and Caradoc,
Of the three faithful lovers of the Ring,
An exiled star for long, who now returns
From that green burgh, down-sloping to the main,
Where ladye-love, most dear, dwells in her halls,
To whom not long ere he returns : Owaine,
Bewitched with pomp and blazonry of arms
Lightest in heart among the warrior-three ;
With secret Aron, solitary, renowned
For artful valour : and, of lute-like tongue,
Gilded Gawaine, born on the southern downs
Amidst the primrose, and as boy and man
His nature wanton ; but a heartening spear
When fortune at her rudest ; crowning all,
Gleamed Launcelot's cross of red, and eager-eyed
Sir Tristram's argent lion, he himself
In silver panoply, to show his cause
Pure, single honour. Adversaries fierce
For martial meddle, drew to Lonazep,
Children of wild repute, their courage known
To Arthur's Table : spears from heathenesse,
Beyond the four salt floods : from Calydon,
Beneath whose lofty, bare-stemmed, bush-topped pines
Dwell serpents of the fiend : and knightly blooms,
New-sprung since Marhaus, from Ierne's shores
With gold-fringed lips, alike for love alert,
Or dauntless battle-cry : and swarthy-faced,
Their hate devised upon their shields, knights ten
From Marches of North Galis : nor had failed

The liberties of Richmondshire to send
 Her company of valour : nor had failed
 Deira's wolvisish lords. For knightly cheer,
 And to outbrave report of byegone jousts,
 All shewed as new as Lonazep's first day,—
 Knights in the gorgeous housing of their steeds
 And harness of the war, and carven twain
 New curiously gilded galleries
 Contained the dames, whose silent Tournament
 Of Jewels resounded through their times as loud
 As tourney feats—since well it might—that shew
 Of gem-besprinkled raiment, lustrous gems
 Kindling upon white fingers, bosoms, arms,
 Or pendant from the shell-like pale pink ear,
 Accessory unto other charms,—what charmed
 Before, now doubly charms—each dame more fair
 Than on each former day, as beauty here
 Flourished on valour.

Chief, La Belle Isonde,
 Enriched with hues known of that earliest spring
 Beheld by her in Joyous Gard : loose-robed
 In silken amethyst from hem to throat,
 Topaz and chrysoprase her gems, of flowers
 Of souvenance and promise fairest sign
 And of young greening days,—these in her hair
 A shining chaplet—those, a beating light
 Upon her bosom. Vivien in her sport,
 Showed none of native colours : such, her maid
 Amidst the rural throngs ordained to wear—
 False yellow, whereby lost her gaysome charms
 Of sun-brown cheeks, those founts of fire, dark eyes,
 And golden jewels drowned in yellow folds—
 Nor worse, nor better, than when amber clouds
 With evening stars between, their mutual glow
 Lost in each other : but that fallen star,
 Vivien, with thought on Tristram still, enrobed

In ample sendal of the emerald's sheen,
Bedashed with gems of liquid light as dews
In morning grass, and of that light there hung
A princedom, shining in each ear. Around,
Those in the worship of herself, or those
In worship of the knight on whom her guiles
Were now adventuring, jasper on their brows
Figured in circlets of bright flexile gold,
Or in the necklace wavering : no attire
Amidst the sunny flock, but there beheld
Of green of meads and mountains, chrysolite
And beryl, sparkling in some quaint device.
Others, who angled for themselves, displayed
More varied shews, and none bewitching more
Than mutable, flying colours, worn by those
Unstable in opinion—opals, chief,
With faltering hues which never ceased to gleam :
Those pledged to knights, well known their firm intent,
Those pure, in samite fair, as washed in white
Chalcedony attired, with silver bloom
Of pearls, as lacking gems : maids, in desire,
Marked by their violent colours—many a heart
In the hot blaze of garnets told its own
Consuming passion : milder loves, wore gems
Sea-green, or of the Lydian stone, whose gloom
Gave fairer lustre to the fairest fair—
And amethyst, which cheeks of rosy-red
Makes lovelier, as the violet lain beside
The fragrant maiden's-blush. Those crystal stones,
Imperial diamond, reserved shone sole
O'er Arthur's brows, and twain from Central Ind,
Whose price were empires, cunningly were set
Eyes in the Dragon of the Throne.

These shews,
I name, aware, nor ever in this realm before,
Nor since, so beauty in victorious pride

Adorned : fires answering fires, as on the hills
The beltane flames, through all the galleries
The jewels blazed that day, a light of fame
Which beamed through centuries of this realm, nor yet
Paled in its colours.

Ere these jousts began,

A private word reached Lonazep : therewith,
A golden ring, assurance whose the word
For Launcelot ; whereupon, he called his squire ;
Armed—sought the tourney—well-surmised by all,
Queen Guinevere had made him new of heart.
So ere devoir was paid to Belle Isonde,
Sir Tristram knew his love must have debate
With Launcelot's love, all knew dread time was near
When love debateth love. Four hours, the storm
Of thunder-hoofs, of martel, spear and sword,
With crimson showers of death, raged through the lists.
And Table Round held glory in account.
No more the heathen number in their hosts
That score of martial manhood,—prey of lance
Thrust through the gates of endless sleep. How vain,
In valour's morn, Ierne's chivalry
Shewed blazonry of beauty on its shields,
With lightsome war-cry, "Rashness cancels fear!"
The dark encounter answers, "Death." The tromp
Which sounds the onset is the tromp of doom
To savage Calydon, Deiras wolves,
And knighthoods from North Galis and the vales
Which lie around the Ure.—But not without
Their rigorous recompense. Owaine was reached
By Gallcoit's northern lance : and Caradoc
Gat Irish favour from Prince Gwittart's brand,
For which his ladye-love must be his leech,
Else his an early burial ; with these two,
Gilded Gawain's life-stream shines i' the sun,
An' so the more his frolic spirit darkens :

Whilst Aron hurt by Andegavion's knight,
Pleads for the sacrament. Amidst this toil
Of tourney-festival, Sir Launcelot won
Surpassing honour ; Tristram's knightly star
Ascending still—his service sadly shewn
In noble peers o'erthrown, and praise which rang
Louder than martial welcomes. As he went,
His yester-noblenesse he crowned with feats
Excelling all that day, as did that day
Excel the valiance of the opening jousts.
Then met the twain ; and from the noon-song hour
Till nearing time of vespers, these twain held
Their joyous meddle. Still within their strength,
Although the strength within their blows had been
Even as their strength of love : who might prevail
None might propose : nor either of those dames,
Guinevere nor Isonde, in these their knights
Suffered reproach of valour : nor could tongue
Diminish aught of glory each attained.
These brother-hearts of chivalry, so left,
As now attained ;—since sable Palomide,
Poisoned in soul, disloyally designed
Once more, a covert stroke on Tristram's life—
Whereof, espied by Launcelot, stern he bade
His knightly brother's sword surcease, and called
With voice fired by death's passion. “ Son of Lok !
“ Base pagan ! Of the northern serpent born.
“ Defouled with falseness and a treasonous will,
“ These lists require thee ! I, within the lists !
“ Assail with thy best courage, or my mail
“ Sufficeth to repulse thee : with best arms
“ Defend thee, or my stroke shall cleave thy steel,
“ An' give thy soul to night. Thy foe, these hours
“ Hath worship of his valour won beyond
“ Our martial brotherhood of Camelot.
“ An' two long, deathly days, thine honour won

"So hardly, he hath shorn and made as naught.
 "Ride forth, avenge its wrong on me—his foe
 "These jousts : on me, or ere my knightly fere
 "Exclude my service. Pagan, son of Lok !
 "Abide my challenge." Whilst Sir Launcelot spake,
 A breeze arose, and now and then of dust
 A cloud passed sighing through the tournament,
 Opening the standard-folds above the king
 Wherein the Dragon moved.

Sir Tristram claimed
 This last adventure,—but with change of cheer,
 The lustre of his armour changed—not morn's
 But evening's light it shewed—approaching gloom,
 Leading to shades of stillness, which the eye
 Of Arthur marked, with anguish in his heart.
 And when the knight of Odin rode the lists
 In ebon harness, no applausive noise
 Rang welcome—silence of eventful change
 O'ercast the tourney,—on his sable steed,
 Lord of dark silence rode the pagan knight.

He paused. His urgent spear within its rest
 Swayed to and fro, as if from playful thoughts.
 None such were his. That, is the spear of hate !
 Gentle its motion, yet it yearns for strife,
 Sealed with dark death's assurance. Now a cloud
 Surged o'er the barriers : and the eddying dust
 Hung round the knight, as when is seen that cliff
 Mist-robed, above the Leeza's reedy marge,
 Solitary of its mountain-girdled vale,
 The Pillar named. On mid-October noon
 So clothed its heights with hoary, tumbling mists,
 That cliff, reverberate, with its thunder-voice
 Gives answer to the tempest : such the tone
 Proceeding from the cloud that clothed the knight.
 "I here require thee, by thy knighthood's faith,

"Bestow my boon !" As message from the breeze
That word sprang through the tourney's purlieu,—heard
With hard heart-sickness. Otherwise, hath heard
The Dragon of the Standard. On the staff
The silken folds heave heavily—now seen
The Dragon's angered head—now sailing wings
Beheld—but spent the breeze, it hides itself
Within its former sleepy lair—and, now,
Lifting, unfolding, gleaming, high it swirled
Above the throne, then with sharp sound shot out
Its battle-roaring grandeurs o'er the lists.
As menacing clang of sword upon the shield
Ere fray begins, Sir Tristram's voice. "What boon,
"Is thine to claim?"—"The boon of thine own vow
"Besought by Cornwall's queen. I ask thy spear."
O, woe, such treasonous wiles, the viper-brood
Of Palomide's crossed love ! Woe, to our knight,
Questioning the message with sore-stricken heart.
As one submerged, in losing hold of life
His inner eye surveys a tract of years,
Their long-lost incidents in shapes and hues,
Alive with old significance : so, now,
The paynim's speech, a wave of death, shut out
As sunk in midnight dark the tourney-scene,
And clear before Sir Tristram's inner sight
Appeared a time and place late-past—one bower,
In Joyous Gard. The noon-tide casement trick't
With jasmin sprays—the sunbeams in the room
Sundered in stars—that amorous hour now his.
He felt the sharp, sweet kisses of the sea ;
Within his heart the favours of that time,
Of love and knightliness,—for Palomide
Was there, the guest : and she, the Beautiful
Whose voice more soft than ocean's murmurous caves,
More musical than chime of Angelus,
From its far island-fane, to tell the hour

Of praise and love—a voice more than its words
 Sweet as they were ; to Tristram's dreamful ear
 A sound of dear melodious memories,—
 Was heard—now silent—now with fervency,
 Spake suddenly, "To honour this fair time,
 "Thy graciousness, thy hospitality,
 "Thy valorous gentleness, good Tristram, yield
 "Our guest a boon ! a loving boon of worth.
 "The corner stone, the flowery capital,
 "The heart and beauteous visage of thy faith
 "Chivalrous, may not lack its worship here.
 "A boon ! a boon !"—"Aught but thyself, my soul."
 Answers her knight. "What claim'st thou, Palomide?"—
 "No boon this hour desires but its own bliss.
 "When fortune veers and mischance mine, then thou
 "The imperfections of a troubled will
 "May help. Or then, the boon, perchance, thy spear."
 O, mischief hiding in a loving wish !
 O, bounteous spirit, whose joy provides the sting
 To slay thee, undisguised ! The fates now call.
 That revered hour slid by, its fair delight
 Drunk by each heart as from the chalice of life
 Its richest wine : and since that revered hour
 To this, nought of its words, which now arose
 With ghostly call for Tristram's doom.—The scene
 In sight and sound, lived with him crystal-clear
 As to the spirit of a drowning man ;
 And Palomide was ware the lion-lance
 Drooped in surrender for his craven boon,—
 The liberal, love-gift boon, made deadly boon—
 Which made his time for gain.

He spurred his steed :

With "Isonde !" on his lips, he spurred his steed
 To Tristram's death, whose soul enwrapt in love
 Played with its lineage of fair joys which bound
 That hour of Joyous Gard—that hour now here.—

Isonde !—Her name rings music since the morn—
Writ crimson by him through the day—the hour
Isonde's ! There came the inspiration !—Quick,
Answering the hastening of the brazen hoofs,
Rising upon his stirrup vehemently,
Tristram bestowed his boon.—“ Thou hast my spear ! ”
O'erthwart the tournament's blood-sloken space
Forthright the spear, which in its passage sang
As on a lurid morn, the seven witch-elms
Above the pass of norland Atäfors
Sing in the storm, or e'er, foredoomed, it smites
Field, wood and thorpe within the dales below :
Sharp-singing, underneath the Dragon's roar,
The spear, midway his course, caught Palomide
As with the cumulative strength of all
Its green and growing years, by him received
As fate's own shaft : nor armour of defence,
Nor warding gauntlet's art availed—the shaft
Bestowed death's twilight. He down-driven to earth,
Not answering to the herald's second call,
The haught day's fortune, given as diadem
Of Lonazep's three days, was then proclaimed ;
And these twain martial brethren, as in love
In arms, Launcelot and Tristram, these receive
The day's degree, the diadem-degree.
Even as the praise and wonder of the world
Their ladies' beauty : thus, to them assigned
Honour of valour, eminent o'er knights
And Table Round. But, with his helmet doffed,
Launcelot unto the king :—“ Of all the knights,
“ Good king, we number in our honour's guild,
“ My brother-peer select, the perfect flower.
“ That grace, I may not here dispute, divide,
“ Abridge—since, ye may learn it from the folk,
“ Had not this Palomide disturbed our fray
“ With infidel guile, on which no sentence more,

“ Since his the leech’s inquest for his harm—
“ My royal brother, Knight of Lyonesse,
“ Sir Tristram, had maintained throughout this day
“ On me, his jewelled honour. And, therewith,
“ My soul accords—as gladsome as nine jousts
“ Her glory, yielding Tristram the degree.”

Was it the breeze, or came it from her heart
That quickening of Belle Isonde’s hair, when heard
The speech of Launcelot? Straightway, she uprose
As to approve his finding, when uprose
Rejoicing thunders from the barriers. Not
Sir Tristram’s valour, nor Sir Launcelot’s free,
Full-hearted graciousness, but sudden view
Of this the lion’s inspiration, queen
Of chivalry and beauty, brought that joy
Thus mightily on the lists. Then, Hesper’s lamp
Westward, now lightening the grey gates of even,
Closing the tourney, all the knightly throng
Blew unto lodging, and their diadem-prize
And praise were given our peer. And thus was kept
The tourney-tryst of Lonazep.

But thoughts

More foul than Palomide’s : and hearts more smooth—
Though humorous in delight—than Belle Isonde’s
Or Tristram’s : and excelling Launcelot’s eyes
In searching evil—there were thoughts abroad,
And laughing hearts, and eyes of piercing ken,
That earnest day.

At opening of the jousts,

Sir Dinadin tricked out with dress and paint
As grim and grinning gargoyle, lent his mirth
Within and out the barriers : oft the gems,
Twinkled to note his travestie of sport,
Obeisance, pageant, essay : oft their lights
Brake into tinkling laughter-rills, whenas,
Curt sentence dropt among them acid-sweet

With double-ending rhymes. But, now, as eve
Lifting within high heaven her star of peace,
No singing-tourney prowess might be his,
Angered, on Tristram's thrice-approved degree,
He poured the venom of the day, more keen
Through his unshaken humours ; which, thrice-told
Nor moved the lion-knight,—he cried,—“ You go
“ To hear the fool-talk, make one in fools'-play.
“ Go. —Thinking good most evilly, since, unknown
“ Things with their sober faces,”—“ Dinadin !
“ The bells of Dagonet you have usurped
“ Throughout this tourney, nor have rung them well.
“ Too much of fool upon thy tongue. Shall I
“ Call thee fool-Dinadin ? Which were more truth,
“ Than thy devisings of a courtly throng
“ Now gathering from the borders of the field
“ Of death and honour. All day, hast thou been
“ In trouble as the pot upon the fire,
“ And, now, ye bubble hot phrase meaningless
“ In such thy mood.”—“ List, an' I speak ye calm.
“ And slow my voice, and clear, to speak proud words
“ Of burning glory. These twain days, men know,
“ Thy valour as the valour of seven. Ay, more ;
“ The ghostly memories of our mighty wars
“ Will perish on the lips, whenever heard
“ These jousts of Lonazep. But was all glory,
“ All this day ? Mordred,—ye would note,—I trow,
“ Of many colours were his company
“ In petticoats. Ye noted. Him I heard,
“ Hissing his single phrase maleficent,
“ Of fray in which he hath defect.—‘ My King,
“ ‘ Your King, in suffering shame obscure, unnamed,
“ ‘ Abates not in his general laud and smile.
“ ‘ Approving best hot revelry in arms,
“ ‘ He keeps vile lust of blood keen in his Ring.
“ ‘ Weeds of the carnage his surpassing boast.

" Ah me, how blind men be : none wot he keeps
 " The secrecy of monarchs, who have tamed
 " The fierce blood of their kindred, and must keep
 " The salt taste of the blood full-well provoked
 " Within his the belt of valour. Blood ! ' Dames heard ;
 " An' those who wore their pledges heard.—God's peace,
 " Adding one to one ye marvelling cry, ' five ! '
 " Forgotten three slides in, an' darkens faith.
 " Mordred is more than Mark, much more—much less,
 " Than Vivien. This day, sheen of gems and smiles--
 " Around her feet the shades. Sly sorceress !
 " Mark,—Mordred—other shrouded forms, I see,
 " (The carrion on her way) who work her wish—
 " Dominion. As o'er Merlin, laid in sleep
 " Beneath the white thorn in Broceliande
 " Her prey in body and soul—she, o'er these days,
 " Valiance and blaze of lauds of Lonazep
 " A death-cloud permanent, as death o'er life,
 " O'er pride and puissance of Logris.—Knight !
 " May sleepers in the sepulchre awake
 " Before the judgment tromp ? An' be it so :
 " Her little, little laugh shall stir the dust
 " Above her face-cloth, when these faded realms
 " Be truly heathenised. Last, for myself.
 " The present has its own.—Go, priests to church ;
 " Knights to repair their hurt, or some to seek
 " Opinion of the dames,—fool-Dinadin,
 " One happy hour secures for every day,—
 " Less than man's hope, somewhat above his worth,
 " Thinks he, yet ever finds, as now he goes
 " Assured again of choicest meats and drinks—
 " Or cloud, or shine, fool-Dinadin, to dine."

* * * * *

But here, sweet gentles, pause. The sun, you see,
 Bestows wide glories on eve's gathering clouds :
 With ministry of beauty, prophecies,

As known from ancient Palestine, as writ
Within our Book of Life, not clouds, but morn
Fair, shall ascend upon our slumbers. So,
This holding true, we end the golden tale
Of Joyous Gard, of Palomide, his worth,
His consecration, ere again our flowers
Their loveliness and incense both withdrawn,
Or shines within the dusk, that one sole star
Of Love, of lovers all approved their star.

9/14/15



